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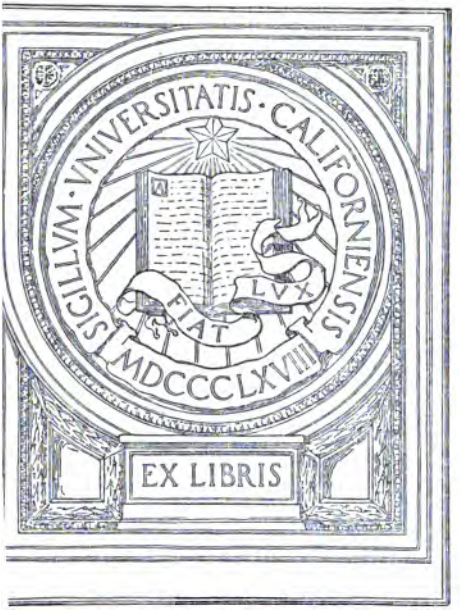

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CECIL, A PEER.

CECIL, A PEER,

A SEQUEL TO

CECIL, OR THE ADVENTURES OF A COXCOMB.

BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

" Locus est et pluribus umbris,"

" A frame containing sketches of the world and its wife."

Horace.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON:

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1841.

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UNIV. OF
CALIFORNIA

CECIL.

CHAPTER I.

For Hope grew round me like the living vine,
And fruits and foliage not my own seemed mine.
COLERIDGE.

Sans besoin et sans abondance,
J'oserais dire sans désirs,
Je vis ici dans l'innocence
Et d'un sage repos fais tous mes plaisirs.
ST. EVREMONT.

THERE are various kinds of solitude in this world.—Childe Harold indited two immortal stanzas, which may save one the trouble of being prosy on the subject:—and Cecil Danby accordingly says ditto to Lord Byron.

It may not be amiss, however, to add, for the benefit of those who delight in circumstantiality, that "amid the hum, the buz, the

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shock" of the Reform Bill, Lady Mereworth and I were as completely alone in our Cyclades in Grosvenor Square, as Juan and Haidee.—Mereworth was a close prisoner in that lordly King's Bench which has no rules to lighten the bondage of its captives; and by virtue of a plea as valid in love as law, "de non apparentibus et non existentibus eadem est ratio."

I sincerely trust my conscientious Public is as much startled by the word LOVE let slip by my pen, as I was myself when it was first suggested to my imagination by the intermeddling of my friends.

People who attain untimely maturity are, I am convinced, subjected to those caprices of nature which every now and then cause an apple tree to re-blossom in the month of September, or a venerable gentleman of eighty-four, to cut a second set of teeth.—I, who had been so parlous a villain at twenty, so corrupt, so heartless, was budding forth into child-like simplicity in my middle age.—I could

almost fancy single-mindedness an infectious disorder, and that I had caught it of the Mereworths.

For I vow to Madame la Comtesse de St. Gratien, or any other of the immaculates, that I had been paying daily visits in Grosvenor Square for three months or more, without one evil thought or project;—perfectly sincere in assuring myself, every night when I wound up my watch, that I had spent a very pleasant day, and entertained "a sincere regard for Mereworth and his wife."

Every body must remember the tedious length of that Reform Bill Session; and the sojourn in town necessitated by the Coronation that was to follow.—Ex-politicians had a hard matter to dispose of themselves; and among other extreme resources for one's ennui, it was the fashion to go to the Haymarket and cry over a *Comédie larmoyante*,—I suppose by way of laying all the dust kicked up by schedules A and B.—One evening, as I was lounging there

with Frank Walsingham, Lady Brettingham beckoned us into her box; and began to talk, as every lady was then talking, about crowns and sceptres, stars and garters, and the peeresses likely to shed lustre on the coronation.—Who was to be fairest among the fair?

Frank was eager in partizanship of the young Duchess of R——, whose beauty the exquisite portrait of Lawrence had recently popularized;—Lady Brettingham, equally vehement in favour of a certain Lady Mitchelston, a young Irish beauty, as yet but little known in London.

"You will see," said I, "that the knowing ones will be taken in.—On such occasions, women who usually produce little effect, make the greatest sensation.—A person of dazzling complexion often tells more by daylight, especially when enhanced by gaudy attire, than one of finer features. Lady A——, for instance, or Lady Mereworth."—

"Lady Mereworth!" interrupted Mariana,

with a contemptuous smile;—"Lady Mereworth is forty, if she is a day!"—

Had she said fifty, I could have borne it,—for the falsehood had been palpable.—But forty was too near thirty-seven to be passed over.

"I was acquainted with Lady Mereworth when a little girl in muslin frocks," said I, much nettled, "and can assure you, from my own knowledge, that she will not be eight-and-thirty till next April."

A glance across Frank towards Lady Brettingham apprized me that Walsingham was biting his lips to prevent laughing outright. Her ladyship was less forbearing.

"Forgive me!"—said she, with the most impertinent air of significance:—"I was not aware that things had gone so far!"

I forget what I thought of when I wound up my watch that night; but I remember that, next day, when I entered the drawing-room in Grosvenor Square, I interrogated the coun-

tenance of Lady Mereworth, conceiving, for the first time, the possibility that it might be susceptible of variation. When the butler announced "Mr. Danby!" I looked straight towards her; and thought I saw,—mind, I only say I *thought* I saw,—a sudden deepening of complexion accompany her spontaneous smile of welcome.—I even fancied,—I had never thought of such things before,—that her breath came shorter, as I described to her the play of the preceding night, and in reply to her inquiries informed her I had been with Lady Brettingham.

Still, she stitched quietly on; and talked of a letter she had received from her son at Oxford, and of some difficulty she had found about the fitting of Mereworth's coronet for the approaching pageant, in a tone indicating any thing but indifference to her family affairs, or want of indifference towards *me;* and when, after having picked up a needle-case which I purposely rolled upon the carpet, I made the

movement a pretext for leaving my chair and taking a place beside her on the sofa, she made way for me precisely with the same mechanical civility she would have done for Lord Ormington.—It was not at all in *that* style it suited me to be encouraged !—

" I do believe I am piqued !" said I to Cecil Danby, with a smile, as I whipped my horse on entering my cabriolet, and drove off where I was little in the habit of driving,—into the Park.—" But after all, it is rather strange I should have been devoting my time to this woman for the last four months, and that she should not discover there is any difference between me and the chair I am sitting upon ?—I will try the effect of a little absence, both on her and myself."

Next day, I did not go so near Grosvenor Square as Park Lane !—I went and played tennis: and being out of practice, played abominably,—lost my money and my temper, and wished Lady Brettingham, (not Lady Mereworth,) at Hanover.

I had not the smallest thoughts of proving the success of my experiment so soon as the day following: but Frank Walsingham having proposed to me at White's to drive me to Connaught Place, where I was to dine, as we traversed Grosvenor Square, proposed leaving cards for the Mereworths. Recalling to mind the expression of his face in Lady Brettingham's box, I knew better than to object; more particularly as I was aware that, at *that* hour, Lady Mereworth was invariably out.—

To my great annoyance, however, no sooner had we stopped at the door, than the officious porter, instead of quietly receiving the cards tendered to him, put aside the hand of the tiger and advancing to the door steps, informed *me* that "My lady *was* at home."—It had not entered into the good man's calculations that after one hundred and thirty-three consecutive visits, I could possibly want to shirk this single one.—

There was no help for it. Though Frank muttered a word between his teeth that sounded

terribly like "bore," we were forced to go up; and on this occasion, there was no mistake. A blush of the deepest and most decided nature *did* brighten the cheek of Lady Mereworth as she accosted me!—Not a syllable of inquiry, no allusion to my yesterday's absence.—Had her conscience been clear, it would have been only natural to say—"What were you doing yesterday that I did not see you?"—Very suspicious!—As I quoted in my last volume, and choose to quote again, "*une femme qui ne vent s'apercevoir de rien, s'est aperçue de tout!*" —This time, it was *my* breath that grew short, however, as I attempted to divert her attention from Frank Walsingham's lively sallies.—

Without imputing a thought to Lady Mereworth that angels might not harbour, it was certainly only natural that, if even the fauteuil on which I habitually sat, had been suddenly moved from the room, she should take heed of its absence; and after those hundred and thirty-three visits, spent in agreeable and im-

proving conversation, it was at least to be expected that she should notice to herself—

> Both how the chair I sat in, and the room
> Began to look when I had failed to come.

If she did *not* choose to notice, it was time I should make her :—

> Formosis levitas semper amica fuit.

I stayed away four whole days :—(and the days of Grosvenor Square are not imperceptible segments of time like those of some unincidental country parsonage!) I stayed away, I say, four whole days; and went and bored myself with listening to the debates, and the Magnificat after them at Bellamy's.—I even submitted to be slapped on the back and called old fellow at White's, by those so vulgarly familiar as to enquire what the deuce I was thinking of that I looked so blue.—

It was not blue, however, that Lady Mereworth looked, when I saw her that night at the Opera;—no! nor red as when I had visited her

with Frank. She was now pale as ivory,—exquisitely pale.—It was the first time I had ever seen her look pale. Hitherto, her life had been so peaceful!—I am convinced she had not slept the two preceding nights!—

I ought to have been sorry:—I never felt so happy in my life!—

> There is pity in many—
> Is there any in *him*?—
> No! ruth is a stranger
> To Cecil the Grim!—

quoth the old ballad.—Yet I ought to have been more merciful, if it be true, as the great truth-teller of all asserts, that "Pity is akin to Love:"—for I now admitted myself *to* myself to be as decidedly in love as is compatible with the maturities of a 2, with a 4 preceding.—

Luckily for *me*,—I was going to say luckily for *us*,—all the world was just then so vanity mad, that the fools of fashion had not a moment's leisure to recommend Lady Mereworth to consult Alexander concerning the weakness

which so often imparted a strange redness to her eyes.—Every body was aloft in the air on the hobby of the Coronation.—Not a woman alive, saving old Lady Cork who figured in hanging sleeves at the Coronation of George III., had seen with her eyes the spectacle of the crowning of a Queen; and people were stark staring mad about coronets and robes of estate.—

It unluckily happened that Lady Brettingham, who, amid the universal irritability of the life of an *intrigante*, had rendered herself a sort of general agent for tickets for the Abbey, having exhausted all other sources in search after one more for the fifteenth cousin of some Liberal Irish member, attacked *me;* and chancing to meet Julia that day at dinner in Connaught Place, I mentioned my desire for a ticket for the Earl Marshal's box.—

Next morning, as I was brooding in my dressing gown over my tender perplexities and my café au lait, in walked Herries with a piece

of green pasteboard in his hand, as a pretext for the visit,—for I was not cordial enough with my most official brother-in-law to encourage him to much intimacy.—

After thanking him for the ticket, which it seems was *his* per privilege of Treasury, (for he did not participate in Danby's abstinence from office,)—Herries suddenly launched out into a cut and dry oration, soulless, nerveless, heartless, as if an exposition of some Budget question to the House,—upon the sinfulness of courting one's neighbour's wife, and the ungrateful injury of shattering the household gods of a friend with whom I had crossed t's and dotted i's at the F. O., in strictest confederacy, twenty years before.—

I wonder I did not exterminate him on the spot!—I contented myself however with blowing out the lamp of my coffee pot to hide my confusion; which operation affording some excuse for the inflammation of my complexion, I simply and Cecilianly asked him what the deuce he meant by talking such nonsense?—

Such was, I daresay, precisely the rejoinder that many an opposition member had often longed to make him.—*O pestis! O labes!*—To have a brother-in-law whom one dared not throw out of the window!—

"But that Mereworth is the only one of my old colleagues who is so unfortunate as to be married," said I, "I should be at a loss to understand you. But considering the indifference you always saw me testify in the days to which you allude, towards Lady Votefilch's niece, it is somewhat curious you should fancy me enslaved, at seven and thirty, by a woman I did not think pretty at seventeen."—

"*I*, my dear fellow?—Be assured I have something else to do than think of any trash of the kind!"—cried Herries. And I saw him beginning to puff and blow and rotundify into the official ox, to a degree that made me apprehend the first person plural. It only needed for Herries to say "We have taken into consideration and seriously disapprove your

liaison with Lady Mereworth," to make me hate her for life. The touch of such an idoloclast would have shivered to pieces even the Medicean Venus!

"I beg to assure you, my dear Danby," he resumed, "that it is only at your sister's suggestion I broach the subject.—Julia is vastly uneasy. Julia is of opinion that amid the moral decencies arising in the regenerated state of society created by the influence and example of a virtuous queen, so strange a breach of personal, and, I may say, social obligations,—so terrible an inroad into the domestic happiness of one of the best and most unsuspecting of men,—an honour to the Order, as well as a staunch promoter of Reform,—cannot fail to affix a most injurious stigma to your name and family: and I can assure this honourable House,—that is, I can assure you, my dear Cecil, that if you imagine the Carlton House school morality likely to maintain its influence in this reformed and regenerated

kingdom, you will find yourself in the minority."—

Without condescending to remind him that he was usurping the Dronebyan privilege, (or that quæ veritate operam dat oratio, incomposita sit et simplex,)—"You really alarm me," said I, coolly;—"alarm me, on *two* accounts,—first, for your welfare as a placeman; and, secondly, for your welfare as a husband; — for it is clear to me that Julia must be out of her wits, or she would not have suggested such an absurdity or impertinence as this interference. But that I bear too much respect to Lady Mereworth to mix her name in any thing so contemptible as a family squabble, I should feel myself called upon to speak more seriously."—

If not seriously, Herries seemed to think I was speaking quite plainly enough; and to disguise his embarrassment, began talking of the Earl Marshal's box.—

There is a tradition in Germany that the

shadowy resemblances of multitudes of men and women are constantly to be met with wandering over the mountain of the Brocken, with labels on their backs recording the names of those by whom they were banished to that super-terraqueous region:—"I wish you at the top of the Brocken!"—being tantamount to our English—"I wish you at Hanover."—

I am of opinion that Herries would have borne the name of "CECIL" on his back as legibly as this present volume, had *his* effigy been encountered at that moment, on the mountain side!—I had hardly patience to sit out his visit, so eager was I to hasten to Grosvenor Square.—Lady Brettingham's jealousy and my sister's anxieties rendered me the happiest of my sex!—

As it happened, I hastened so much, that I got there an hour earlier than my usual time, and to this circumstance was indebted for admittance; for when my accustomed visiting hour of four eventually struck, Lady Mere-

worth's carriage was announced, though she never went out before five. I saw clearly through her manœuvre. Unwilling to expose me to the ignominy of being refused by the servant at the door, she had predetermined to quit the house before the dangerous charmer of her leisure should arrive. How enchantingly had the interference of Herries stood my friend!—

But why my friend?—What did I gain by circumventing her prudent design?—So painfully was she embarrassed, that she embarrassed me in my turn.—Her voice was so husky,—her hand so tremulous,—she was evidently so much in awe of me and of herself, that I began to be afraid of myself too.—Yes! I am not ashamed to own it.—I, Cecil Danby,—was afraid to approach the ear of this gentler Eve in her own fair bower of Eden; and I talked to her of all sorts of indifferent things in a voice as husky, and with a deportment as tremulous as her own.—How thoroughly absurd for two people

of our age to be thus passion-shaken!—But, good Lord! it is only people of a certain age who have force of soul enough to be susceptible of strong emotions!—

All that remained for me, when her carriage came, was to put her into it,—cursing in my heart her coachman's punctuality; and resolve to come earlier on the morrow.—I was now thoroughly absorbed by thoughts of *her*. I could think of nothing else;—marvelling beyond the expression of words how I could have remained blind all those weeks and months to what was silently passing between us. It was like two people starving in a hovel situated over an undetected gold mine!

La nuit porte conseil. My night brought counsel with it black as night. I should blush to own all the evil I projected,—all the evil I foresaw.—I could no longer entertain a doubt that I was far from an object of indifference to Lady Mereworth; and it would be easy so to work upon her feelings as to

make her my slave. Years had elapsed since I had found myself master of a slave,—that is a slave worth reducing to slavery;—a slave who was the mistress of many slaves,—a slave in a diamond necklace and robes of brocade.

I could scarcely resist bragging of my intentions that night to Frank Walsingham; as, standing together on the steps at the Travellers', he alluded in an apologetic tone to Lady Brettingham, as if ashamed of having cut me out. However, I *did* abstain—not so much out of regard for Mereworth or affection for his wife, as out of respect for Cecil Danby.

Meyer is one of the best tailors who ever snipped a coat. Yet I said all sorts of uncivil things about him next morning, as I was dressing to proceed to Grosvenor Square; for though he fitted me to a T, I was afraid he might *not* fit me to a T.-resa. Seriously, however, I had not much to complain of; and I drove up to the door in Grosvenor Square, as gallantly as Wellington gallopped on to the

field of Waterloo, where he had planned an action, as people build chateaux en Espagne, twelve months before.

Joy upon joy,—I was admitted!—I made my way into the drawing-room as blithely as Romeo up the ladder of cords provided by that shocking old Friar Lawrence, whom scarcely an actor now-a-days is modest or *im*-modest enough to represent;—I made my way, I say, into the drawing-room, and had a heavenly choir chaunted forth "She is saved!" as they do in the last act of Goëthe's Faust, could not have been more assured of the fact. —I had no more chance of carrying her off, than the brazen monster in Hyde Park!—

No more paleness,—no more nervousness. Her eye was bright with happiness,—her brow radiant with triumph;—she was not ashamed though her enemies addressed her in the gate! —I never saw a human countenance more joyously resplendent;—her son was with her! Lord Chippenham was seated by her side!—His

father had sent for him from Oxford to the Coronation, where he was to officiate in the royal suite.—

Now, I appeal to my readers whether, had Lady Mereworth entertained a becoming sense of my feelings towards her, she would have rejoiced in the idea of presenting to me a son twenty years of age?—And yet I swear she looked as proud and as pleased when she said —"Mr. Danby, my son,—Chippenham!—have you forgotten Mr. Danby?"—as if she had been doing the most agreeable thing in the world!—

As to resenting her heartless conduct upon the young man, it was out of the question. Never did I see a nobler or finer young fellow, except in one or two of Sir Joshua's portraits. The description given by Richardson of Sir Charles Grandison when a youth at Grandison Hall, shadows forth the noble, frank, and distinguished countenance of this mal à propos intruder.

I hate what is called "a youth,"—which is only a civiller word for hobbledehoy. But Chippenham was perfect,—Chippenham was, *quant au physique,* all I have described my brother to be *au moral.* He took me, meanwhile, so heartily by the hand, that I was forced to affect pleasure in recalling to mind the boy I had held in my arms on the deck of the Ariel, to show him the dolphins at play.

A change was over the spirit of my dream!—Though as sulky as Achilles, and as grandiose as Agamemnon, I submitted to be disarmed by a child!—

Nothing could be more painful than the unsuspecting frankness with which Chippenham took himself for granted as the friend of his father's friend. He did not seem to conceive it possible I could find him a bore; but with gay ingenuousness, began to consult me upon his dress for the coronation.—Who was the best robe-maker?—Where was he to get this, and look for that?—His father, he said,

was too much engrossed by business to be molested about such trifles;—and he evidently addressed me less as the infallible fashion-giver of the day, than as the family Fool, to whom alone it was permissible to prate of velvet and ostrich feathers.—

Lady Mereworth was delighted;—listening with her infatuated eyes fixed on his glowing face, as a woman gazes at twenty on her lover, but at forty on her son;—and when he asked me to drive him down to Webb's in the Strand, —(yes! he actually asked *me*—the Cecil Danby of White's—to drive him into the Strand!)—she seemed to think that nothing could be more natural than the proposal.—

I was obliged to comply;—and to be sincere, in spite of his provoking good faith, was delighted with young Chippenham.—Nevertheless, as we went along, I had serious thoughts of driving against a lamp-post and breaking his bones; for he had the audacity to confide to me certain of his college indiscretions,

precisely in the tone in which a young man relates his follies to an old friend of the family, whose age renders him indulgent.—Moreover, by the glances cast at my companion from a variety of britzkas and barouches as we drove along, I could plainly see it passing in many a giddy mind, "*Who* in the world is that handsome creature Cecil has got with him?"—Cecil was only number II that day in his own kingdom of Coxcombry!—The throne of Richard was succumbing to Harry Bolingbroke.

I pass over the irritabilities of the next four-and-twenty hours.—I remember being woke at five o'clock on the morning of the Coronation day, to the "Master Barnardine rise and be hanged,"—i. e. "dressed,"—of O'Brien, with all the headache and soreness of a man who feels that he has not only been drunk the night before, but has fallen down stairs in his tipsiness and bruised himself from head to foot:—that moral fall of mine being indeed a startler!

It would be a stupid thing to indulge in the flourish of fine writing about a penultimate coronation, the memory whereof has been obliterated by a greater profusion of gold lace and spangles, on an occasion of which an unprecedented concatenation of interests tended to enhance the charm.—I shall therefore spare my readers the

Pride of heraldry, the pomp of power;

and admit that, albeit at five o'clock in the morning,—a capital time of day to part with, in pumps, on the steps of Crocky after supper, but hateful to shake by the hand before breakfast, in any species of costume,—I was so much at odds with the human race, including the Hon^ble^ Cecil Danby, that I had a vast mind to jump into one of the early coaches I saw starting from Hatchett's, and make off for Truro or Aberdeen,—no matter where,—to escape from London and the Coronation!—

But I knew that Danby would take such a

desertion exceedingly amiss. My brother and brother-in-law were to be in their places among the Hon. Gents of the House of Commons; and it was to me that Danby looked to take charge of his daughter, who was to accompany Julia to the Lord Chamberlain's gallery.

Albeit indifferent to mere glaring assemblages of fair faces as to a bed of tulips or anemones, I was more pleased than I liked to acknowledge to myself, on entering the Abbey, by the striking congregation of beautiful women lining the venerable walls, like the sparry incrustations that crystallize some gloomy grot.— Sparkling diamonds, softened by the graceful wave of snowy plumes, served to enhance the living tapestry of fair faces—

> Some looking up, some forward, or aside,
> As suits the conscious charm in which they pride.

I did not, however, dwell more minutely on the reality of the scene than I now intend to dwell on its reminiscences. — Having sunk sullenly into my allotted seat, in a gallery of

the transept, which I had selected among several places offered to me the preceding week, as overlooking the seats of the peeresses,—I pretended to fall asleep to escape the cross-questioning of Lady Harriet Vandeleur, who, by the malice of the Gods, was seated near me,—presenting to the morning sun the awful spectacle of a woman of fifty-five,—farded and frizzled,— pommaded and pomponed,— exhibiting half an acre of complexion rivalling in colour and texture the chest of a Lincolnshire frog.—As I was *not* asleep, it was hard to be oppressed by such a nightmare.

Fast by my side, too, sat a certain lawyer, who presumed to address me with as much confidence as if a Cecil Danby permitted his acquaintance to be claimed by any bigwigged thing, unpreceded, on such an occasion, by the mace and seals.

Every body knows the sort of hysterical anxiety pervading an assemblage of a hundred thousand souls and bodies, prepared to witness

great events and finding them tardy of arrival. People forced to take their places at six o'clock in the morning as spectators of a play for which the curtain is not to draw up till noon, talk, and wonder, and bewilder themselves into such a state of excitement, that if a stray lap-dog run across the stage, they fall into convulsions of laughter —or if a fair face present itself, expatiate into acclamations of delight.

I was leaning my head against the pillar adjoining my place,—my eyes closed against the pageant around me,—as absorbed in reverie as the city ostler, described in one of the ballads of a person named Wordsworth, (a hybrid writer, the produce of a cross between Poetry and Philosophy,) who, true to his early associations as a farmer, stands on the pavement watching the weather, in harvest time,

As though he'd twelve reapers at work in the Strand;—

thinking how little, at twenty and a half in Hanover Square, I had expected to live through

three reigns, and achieve my present years of indiscretion, without accomplishing distinctions such as would assign me a specific place in the ceremonial of the day.—I don't know *what* I fancied I should be,—Chancellor, Chamberlain, Ambassador, peer, or premier,—but the coxcomb who knows himself capable of *any* thing, conceives it impossible he can end without being something.—Yet *there* I was, in my bag and sword,—no better than in the onset;—a mere younger son,—a man about town,—a useless cobweb still fluttering on the gilded rafters of the Temple of Folly!—

From these Solomoniacal cogitations I was roused by a growing murmur of approval deepening into rapturous outcries. Opening my eyes with a stare of interrogation at my neighbour, the officious lawyer, he replied with a detestable smirk, "Oh, nothing! only one of the peeresses taking her place." — To me, "one of the peeresses" implied Lady Mereworth.—I could not understand just then that

there existed any other than that single Countess; and starting up, began to adjust my glasses for investigation.

I was mistaken of course. Debrett, Burke, and Westminster Abbey, admitted the existence of many peeresses, albeit I knew but one. The woman entering was younger and taller.—It was, if I remember, the Marchioness of Hastings, then a bride, with her train borne by her page, looking the high-born and high-wedded Baroness, to a degree that enchanted my neighbours. To *me* she was no more than the marble effigy of Lady Elizabeth Russell in one of the adjoining chapels; and I therefore sank to sleep again,—that is, to the semblance of sleep.

Soon, however, murmurs of applause arose so frequently, for the diamonds of this Duchess, or the beauty of the other Countess, that I judged it expedient to be wide awake.

But when *my* Peeress arrived there were no acclamations,—no murmurs of applause, that I could distinguish. For she came so

mildly, so unpretendingly,—she stole so softly to her place, like the dawning of a summer day,—that they knew not of her coming till she was there. *I* saw her from the moment she entered the doors. *My* eyes were riveted upon her fair, pure, matronly beauty,—her downcast looks,—her cheeks suffused with blushes that might have become the maidenliness of sixteen. For in nature, Lady Mereworth *was* sixteen. The world had done nothing to wither the complexion of her heart.

I fancied—Heaven and Lord Mereworth forgive me,—that the eyes thus inclining to the ground were shrinking less from the gaze of the thousands assembled, than from the certainty that in that crowded Abbey there was

> An eye would mark
> Her coming, and look brighter when she came!—

From the post I occupied, I could watch, unseen and unsuspected by *her*, her every look and movement.—She was placed by order of

precedence, next to the restless, showy, fussy Countess of Grindlesham; who kept leaning over to whisper to this person and gesticulate to that, moping and mowing, full of fashionable fidgets and graceful attitudization. Lady Mereworth,—charming contrast,—a halcyon brooding on the waters—soft, gentle, womanly —was tranquil and

> inwardly intent,
> Like some fair statue on a monument;

and when the pealing of the anthem began, I even saw her droop

> With head declined, as one who prayed.

The solemn strain of that august music penetrated her inmost soul; and when again she raised her head, the darkened tint of her eyelashes showed that tears had been gathered there. Her companions were not thus affected. While the mighty diapason of the organ was still pealing among the groined arches above, speaking as it were the language of Scripture, and awful as the voice which on Mount Sinai

smote with awe the ear of the prophet, Lady Grindlesham and the rest of those foolish women were arranging their diamond sleeve broaches, settling their cherusses of gold, or nodding to some fool in the galleries, as idle and as discreditable as myself.—Decidedly, there was but one noble lady on the bench of peeresses that day!—

Suddenly, I saw that drooping head uplifted, like some flower on which a sudden dew has conferred new powers of vitality. Lady Mereworth looked up, with the sort of seraphic enthusiasm one can imagine a Gheber turning his face in adoration towards the glorious East; and I could perceive by the movement of the fair shoulders to which her crimson robes imparted such dazzling whiteness, that she was moved by deep emotion.

There was not much difficulty in detecting the cause. At that moment the Princesses of the Blood were entering the choir: in the train of one of whom walked Chippenham, looking

as if he had stepped out of one of Vandyke's aristocratic pictures — the very epitome of beauty and nobleness. He was all that he ought to be,—officiating at the crowning of his sovereign ; and just *what* he ought to be, to do honour to such a ceremony. One could not help recalling to mind that his father's Barony dated from the days of Stephen !—

As the train passed before the seats of the peeresses, poor Theresa sat " like a nun, breathless with adoration," enjoying precisely such a state of silent ecstacy as may have awaited the orisons of the blessed martyr, her Spanish namesake. At that moment, she thought of no mortal living but her son,—no ! spiteful reader,—certainly not even of Mereworth ;—for she knew precisely in what part of the bench of Peers opposite, his place was appointed, and I can swear that her eyes never once wandered in that direction. If they had, they would have found his attention absorbed by the rigmarole of the Earl of Wolverton, who sat beside him,

concerning some new project submitted to the Royal Agricultural Society of Belfast, for draining the bogs of Ireland by means of Caoutchouc filters. But, I say again, she thought of no mortal creature but her son.

Even when Lady Grindlesham, who was craning and grimacing, turning her head every second to the right and left, like the clockwork conjurer at Merlin's, suddenly noticing Lord Chippenham, began to indulge in vociferous compliments, I saw that she answered not a word.—It is true, Lady Grindlesham's compliments most likely regarded the richness of his point collar, or the fall of his ostrich plume.—

And thus it was, that, of the hundred thousand people present, one alone entered into the feelings of Lady Mereworth!—To all the rest, she was nothing,—she was only "one of the peeresses,"—less attractive to the mobility than a herald's pursuivant,—less attractive to the nobility than the ugliest lady in waiting.

While I sat perched like a solitary sparrow on my gallery top,—with my glasses fixed upon her,—(blessed be Dollond for their excellence!) noting her every variation of complexion,—her every rising tear,—her every nascent emotion! My soul was with her, as the green snake coiled around the bird of Christabel,—

> Which with the dove still heaves and stirs,
> Swelling its neck, as she swells hers!

Surely such sympathies, cannot exist in vain!

> Spirits are not finely touch'd save to fine issues;

And so ardent a passion could not exist purportless as that which now made me forget my forty-two years of age,—and, still more wonderful, *her* seven and thirty!——

"May I ask the name of that very lovely woman, Sir?"—inquired my officious neighbour, whose reiterated questions throughout the day made me almost regret I had not brought the two volumes of the peerage in my pocket.—

"*Which* lovely woman, Sir?"—said I, looking half-fierce, half stupified at the interruption.—

"The one you have been admiring for the last twenty minutes," he coolly replied.—"A most divine creature, certainly!"—

"*That*, Sir?"—said I, suddenly jerking the sight of my glasses thirty yards from Lady Mereworth, to the benches occupied by the wives of peers' eldest sons.—"*That* is Lady Tullamore, daughter-in-law to the Earl of Charleville; daughter of the late Jack Campbell; one of the loveliest women in England. She used to be called in Italy "Beaujolais la Belle." Is there any other information, Sir, I can have the honour of affording you?"—

The lawyer who had stood up and tempted me, asking me questions, seemed scarcely to know what to make of the sudden ferocity of my deportment; but while he remained confounded,—harassed out of patience like some noble steed by the gadfly that has settled on his flank,—I rushed out of the gallery, to wander

for coolness and freedom among the dark passages of the Abbey.—

I was just in that state of emotion and excitement when the senses of sight and hearing are lost in whirl and confusion. The glaring colours, glancing and glittering in the Abbey,—the murmur of thousands of whispers unlike any other murmur in the world,—combined with the pealing thunder of the organ, and its mysterious echoes of chanting, pursued me as I hurried along.—Not a soul was to be seen in those dismal corridors. All who had eyes to see, had pressed into the Church to gaze upon the gorgeous pageant of the moment. Even the door-keepers were peeping between the interstices; and I could not find a human being to shew me the way out, among the intertangled corridors devised to facilitate ingress to the various boxes.

I wanted air,—I wanted to reach the open doors;—yet having attained the ground floor, whichever way I took was sure to lead me back

into the body of the Abbey. At the close of every passage, was a vista of kneeling figures, officiating in the solemnity of the moment.—

At length, impatient of my gropings in the dark, I determined to make my way into the Abbey; and pushed forward towards the light glimmering at the end of the passage in which I stood, which exhibited the usual termination of kneeling men and women.—Still dazzled by visions of fair shoulders and countess's coronets,—and judging that the sortie in question would lead me into the transept pretty near the peeresses' bench, I emerged into the open space.—

Εστι τε φυσει ποιητικη ἡ συμπασα αινιγματωδης.

Merciful heaven!—instead of attaining a living breathing atmosphere of beauty and splendour, I stood in the still cold house of death!—Not a sound,—not a movement!—The kneeling figures were the marble effigies surrounding the tomb of the Duke of Buckingham;

—and in that quiet awful chapel, did I sit myself down, chilled to the very marrow by the fearful contrast of past and present,—the living and the dead!—

Never had the voice of the preacher denounced the Vanity of Vanities in a voice so trumpet-tongued, as that which whispered to me from the grave of the court favourite of other century—

Reliquendum est!

CHAPTER II.

Quadrupedante putrem sonitu quatit angula campum.—Virg.

Send to Newman's for two pair of posters.—Ed.

Every body knows the sort of rush that prevails in London after the coming off of a popular show at the close of the season.—Post-horses at every door,—family coaches loaded with imperials stuffed full of faded finery and disappointed misses, at every turnpike ;—all the world is smitten with a full-gallop *entrainement* towards its country seat.—

I was decidedly out of spirits.—Windsor Castle was no longer *my* country seat; and Ormington Hall a country seat that my soul abhorred.—London was impossible, even to *my* metropolitan predilections. I made my way

therefore once more to Grosvenor Square; in hopes some kindly breath might indicate to the vane of my inclinations whitherward they were to direct their course.—

For the first time for fifteen years, I found Mereworth in his own drawing room instead of his wife; and from the extreme cordiality of his hand-shaking, judged that something was amiss;—for *le mari qui ne veut s'apercevoir de rien* is even more to be dreaded than the wife.

The room smelt as powerfully of the paste of newly boarded works, as Hatchard's or Murray's, and no wonder,—for on the table usually covered with Sevres inkstands, Dresden shepherdesses, and Bohemian drinking glasses, —as elegant a confusion of useless nothingnesses as the most crowded ball-room,—lay a collection of goodly tomes—"Excursions" and "Brunnens"—"Autumns on the Rhine"—"Cruises in the Levant"—"Expeditions in Upper Egypt,"—and all the other paper kites

of the spring *volée*, purporting to pilot the fashionable tourists of the autumn.—There were half a dozen Hand-books, and as many Posting maps;—travelling was evidently the order of the day.

"You are just in time to assist us with your advice, my dear Danby," said Mereworth, again seating himself to the table.—"Theresa is so thoroughly done up by the fatigues of the season, that Halford thinks very seriously of her case, and advises a milder climate.—Instead therefore of going into the country to shoot with Chippenham, (who, by the way, was off this morning into Norfolk,) I shall hasten to the Continent.—My wife, poor thing, is naturally anxious to be off, for her health is sadly shattered.—We go on Saturday,—but whether to Pau or Nice, or whether we shall make at once for Naples, I can scarcely make up my mind.—I, you know, must be back after Christmas for Parliament and the boys' holidays;—but Theresa will remain abroad till the spring!"—

I might as well not have risked the rheumatism by moralizing those five and twenty minutes in the damp chapel containing the Duke of Buckingham's monument! for at Mereworth's announcement, my heart began to beat a générale, as if the guard were turning out for the King and Queen.—

At that moment, Lady Mereworth entered the room. I had never seen her so pale,—I had never seen her so depressed;—and began to be uneasy lest these medical prognostications should bode more than one of the ordinances which, at the close of every London season, ensure the re-engagement of couriers, the signature of passports, and the purchase of Hand-books.—Perhaps the emotions of the gentle heart of Theresa were *really* corroding that hitherto unshaken frame!—Perhaps the damask cheek was *really* ceding its freshness to the worm i'the bud!—Oh! Cecil—Cecil!—

I wonder, by the way, whether Sir Henry ever surmised the amount of practice which

for twenty years of his life, the malefactions of the last-named individual threw into his hands! —Lady Brettingham's jealous fits alone, or as *she* called them, fits of nervousness, must have been worth twenty guineas per month to him, for nearly three seasons and a half.—

On the present occasion I expressed myself properly anxious,—by *properly* meaning as anxious as a man can be touching a woman's health, with her husband in the room;—and Lady Mereworth replied, as I suppose every woman replied that day whose health was enquired after,—"that the ceremony of the preceding day had been extremely fatiguing,—the heat excessive,—and the difficulty of getting away insupportable. Her hair-dresser had been with her at five o'clock in the morning, and they had not sat down to dinner till ten at night."—

All this of course was for the *cantonnade*, after the style in which squirefied families talk at table, for the edification of the servants,

looking at each other all the time as much as to say "fudge!"—I flattered myself that Lady Mereworth was looking "fudge" at *me*;—meaning to insinuate that her sufferings were far from an affair of yesterday: and my looks replied appropriately by a fervent benediction. —Mereworth did not hear us; he was poring over a map of the Archipelago.—

A minute afterwards, raising his head suddenly from the chart, perhaps to surprise us, he exclaimed—"By the way, Cecil, who was that lovely girl of whom I saw you taking such care in the rain last night, when we were all turned out of the Abbey to wait for the carriages?"—

Happening to be seated so near Lady Mereworth as to catch a view of her countenance, I saw her cheeks flush crimson while waiting my reply; and had still enough coxcombry in my soul to profit by the indication, and prolong her suspense.

"I don't remember any woman in parti-

cular, to whom I devoted myself yesterday," said I, assuming a tone as though Cupid in person officiated as tiger to my cabriolet.—

"A beautiful creature,—a clear brunette, for whom I saw you half knocking down one of the policemen to procure a seat," persisted Mereworth,—while his Theresa's complexion rose and rose at every word, like the mercury in a thermometer.

Still, I chose to look uncertain, though well aware that it was my niece; over whom I had mounted guard during the two hours that Julia had been compelled to wait in the covered way for their carriage.

"I scarcely remember to have seen a more charming creature!" resumed the Earl, holding up the map to the light, to ascertain the exact line of some newly established steamer. —"So much grace, yet such perfect simplicity. And then, what a variable complexion! As I stood watching her while you were talking to her, it reminded me of those beautiful lines of the

old poet, (Ben Jonson's, an't they?) of the eloquent blood, speaking in some fair one's cheeks—

> Which so divinely wrought
> That you might almost dream her body thought!"—

Blockhead!—His Theresa's body was thinking at the rate of a Locke or a Maupertius, within half a yard of the back of his chair,—yet he saw nothing!—

Lady Mereworth's thoughts, however, were so manifest and so manifestly painful, that I took compassion on her.—

"Surely you do not allude to Danby's daughter?" said I. "Did you never happen to see my pretty niece before?"—

"Of course it was Miss Danby!"—cried Mereworth, again suddenly turning round, and addressing his wife. "We ought to have guessed it, by her being with Mrs. Herries!"—

"And now I think of it, she is the image of her poor mother!"—said Lady Mereworth, cheerfully, as if greatly relieved.—

"To be sure, how little one notes the lapse of time!"—said the Earl, with an emphatic gesture of the chin, and solemn voice, as if quoting from Young's Night Thoughts.—"It seems but yesterday that I remember poor Lady Susan Theydon coming out!—Do you recollect, Cecil,—just before you went to Lisbon?"—

I hated talking about Lisbon,—and I hated thinking about poor Lady Susan,—two fertile sources of melancholy reflections.

"Jane is scarcely yet seventeen," said I,—evasively;—"a charming creature,—full of sense and sensibility. From her earliest childhood, my brother has devoted himself to her. Danby is entirely wrapt up in that girl!"—

Lady Mereworth was now looking so amazingly happy that I began almost to fear the expedition to a milder climate would be abandoned;—and accordingly fell into raptures about one or two other of the beauties who were supposed to have excelled at the ceremony

of the preceding day. But she was in such a provoking mood of self-satisfaction, that nothing seemed to excite her uneasiness.—

A minute afterwards, it was *my* turn to be startled.

"Are you not enchanted, my dear Theresa, that it should turn out after all to be Cecil's niece?"—said Mereworth, coolly;—the lady with equal coolness replying, "I am indeed!—I must confess that my uncertainty on the subject kept me all night from closing my eyes."—

It was the turn of *my* body to think now,—and I own it thought, through a blush of the most carnation dye, that the happy pair before me were two of the most extraordinary people in the world.

Three volumes and a quarter of my sapient instructions have perhaps so far enlightened the mind of my Public, as to enable it to think in its turn.—My fairer readers have possibly surmised the truth: that young Chippenham

had been very much struck by Jane, and that his parents were anxious to ascertain to whom the first sighs of their heir apparent were about to be dedicated. I remembered, now, having seen Lord Chippenham loitering about on the day before, when I was engaged in conversation with Jane and Julia. But he was interesting to me only as his mother's son,—not as the admirer of my niece.—

Still, it was clearly not the sleeplessness of the night before, whatever its origin, which had caused the President of the Royal College to suggest a southern climate to Lady Mereworth.—The evil must be of older standing. I returned, therefore, to the charge.—

"How will you ever be able to separate yourself from your son, by a sojourn on the Continent?"—said I, addressing the Countess.

"Chippenham must at all events remain at Oxford another term," said she. "He has not taken his degree. Indeed he is not of age till the autumn.—By that time, probably I shall return to England.—

"And I shall myself be in London part of the winter," said the Earl. "By the way, Cecil,—you are now an idle man. Why not come abroad?—Why not spend the winter with us at Nice or Naples?—In that case, I would bring the old Ariel round to Naples in the spring, and we might enjoy a cruise to Egypt, to remind us of the days when we were young."—

Was there ever such insulting confidence in man's integrity, as to propose to him the care of a charming wife during a prolonged absence!—I swear the blockhead deserved that I should accept his insolent offer.—But "neminem id agere, ut ex alterius prædetur inscitia!"—

"Your proposal is indeed tempting," said I, and I drew nearer to the table covered with moist octavos, as if to weigh the comparative merits of "Excursions in Egypt" and a "Ramble through the Morea."—When, unluckily, Lady Mereworth's cheeks took to thinking again; and how on earth was I to interpret

whether her present blush were expressive of "Go!"—or "Stay!"—

It would have been agreeable enough to me to bear them company, even had the Countess of Mereworth of Grosvenor Square been as indifferent to me as the Lady Theresa of Maybush Lodge; for I was in the state of unattachedness which makes an object of any kind a relief. A leader is as indispensable to me as to a morning paper, or a dog to a blind beggar. Besides, I really wanted to have a look at the revolutionized countries which had been casting their skins, to ascertain whether they were the sleeker or brighter for their change of vestments.

But just as Mereworth was cordially renewing his invitations, and assuring me it would be a great comfort to him, since he was obliged to return to England for Parliament, to leave Theresa to my care,—the door opened, and "the Earl of Wolverton!" was announced; who came shuffling in, with a roll of papers nearly

as large as himself under his arm,—plans and projections for the Caoutchouc drainage which, in pursuance of his botheration of the day before, he was eager to lay before his brother of the Peers.

Lady Mereworth took the opportunity to inquire of the servants who ushered him in, whether her carriage were in waiting?—and, on pretence of an engagement, hurried away, leaving me in the hands of the Philistines.—But, to my utter surprise, on taking with a lover's peevish tenderness the place she had just vacated on the sofa, I found legibly written in pencil on the back of the book of the Coronation Service she had been rolling in her hand during the conversation, the single word "REFUSE!"—Could I doubt that it was inscribed by the hand of Theresa, and addressed to myself?—The pencil which had traced the letters lay within the pages, and I could even fancy it still warm from her touch!

I do not see what right any two Peers of the

realm could have to suppose that a younger brother like myself, without an acre of land he could call his own, would give his attention to a patent plan for bog reclaiming.

Yet though it had been nothing to me to see the whole Bog of Allen so substantialized as to admit of removing the Curragh to its surface, I own I ought to have made a more decent show of attention to my noble cousin's moonraking projects.

But though the House of Lords was compelled to listen to his nonsense, I was not;—and in the midst of a demonstration calculated to drive even Babbage to his wits' end,—I vanished,—almost as clumsily as Hamlet Senior through the creaking trap-door of some provincial theatre. Mereworth merely looked up from the papers in his hands, as I left the room, to say—" You'll let me know, Cecil, how you make up your mind,—for we shall be off before Sunday."

Now there are two causes, my very dear

Public,—take it from me who have penetrated to the heart's core of the matter,—there are two, equally cogent causes, for the severity of a woman towards the admirer she thinks proper to snub. You may be loved too much,—or too little.—How was I to decide between these alternatives, as regarded Lady Mereworth?—

I went straight from Grosvenor Square to White's;—and never was more conscious of the power of a Club to dispel the irritations of egotism.—Every body was in spirits. Every body was talking about the Coronation. Every body was talking about their pleasure-plans for the winter.—It would have been impertinent at such a moment to touch upon my personal discontents.—If I had come in on crutches, or with my arm in a sling, they would not have noticed it;—how much less the pensive expression of a countenance

Sicklied o'er by the pale cast of thought!—

All true philosophers would have done as I

did; *viz.* joined the house dinner that day with half a dozen of the pleasantest fellows about town; and, with the aid of an extra bottle of claret, forget there was such a thing in the world as that softer sex which deals so hardly with *us* when it finds us growing soft in our turn.—

Narratur et prisci Catonis
Sæpè mero calmisse virtus;

and I own I have always found my strength of mind and body renovated by a glass of Château Margoux.—The magic bath of Medea, which converted elderly gentlemen into young ones, was doubtless neither more nor less than a pipe of Cyprus wine.

"Mereworth tells me he has been trying to persuade you to go abroad with him?" observed Danby, as I was dining tête-à-tête with him in Connaught Place the following day.

"Yes,—he *wished* it, but I have declined!" was my careless reply.—

"I should have thought it might have suited

you, as you will not consent to accompany us this year to Ormington?" said my brother.—"The Mereworths are such excellent people!"—

"Excellent people are seldom very amusing ones," said I, taking occasion to be very curious in salting my filberts.

"Excellent people are excellent companions when able to amuse oneself in their company, with a succession of interests and excitements, as in foreign travel," said Danby.—"I scarcely know two persons for whom I have a higher regard than Mereworth and his wife."—

I muttered something about the mediocrity of the Earl's abilities, which certainly came ill from *my* lips, so long as Danby chose to be indulgent.

"I do not agree with you," said my brother. "Mereworth has precisely the order of abilities most available to his position in life. I see no great occasion for an Earl with forty thousand a year to be a man of genius; while good plain sense and stedfast uprightness are invaluable

qualifications.—The prudence of such a man as Mereworth in the Upper House, is worth all that the utmost brilliancy of talent or acquirement could compass in our own."

"That is to say, you think him dull enough for the lords," said I, peevishly.—"Well! I dare say you know best.—By the way, his son seems inclined to keep up the family predilections. Chippenham was amazingly struck yesterday with the beauty of Jane."—

"Indeed?—It is to that, perhaps, I am indebted for Mereworth's visit to-day;—for he inquired about my daughter,—and told me that if I intended to present her next spring, whenever Mrs. Herries was disinclined to act as her chaperon, Lady Mereworth would be happy to be Julia's substitute.—Let me see—Mereworth's daughters are married, I think?"

The idea of Theresa as a grandmother moved my choler so amazingly, that I swallowed a glass of Madeira at a mouthfull.

"Mereworth has no daughters," said I.

"He has two boys at Eton; but Chippenham is the only one grown up."—

And I proceeded to describe the noble heir of the house of Mereworth in terms which, at the close of my observations, induced my brother to observe, with a heavier sigh than I had ever heard him indulge in since the loss of poor little Arthur:—"The idea of Jane's marrying at all seems to me almost sacrilegious. I dare say the feeling has a selfish origin, for I scarcely know what will become of me when I have lost her!—Still less am I inclined to form ambitious projects on her account. Let her only be happy, and I shall be content!—Yet I own to you, my dear Cecil, that could I have projected a conquest for her, or could I now project a marriage, it would be with a young fellow such as you describe in Chippenham, and such as I know him to be in all particulars of fortune and connection."

"To the good health of the happy couple, then!"—said I, gaily,—again filling my glass.

"Hush, hush!"—interrupted Danby, by way of moderating my enthusiasm, little suspecting its hollowness,—for the idea of Lady Mereworth's son as a father of a family *ne me souriait pas le moins du monde.* "I have always heard that the premature discussion of such matters was fatal to their success. Not another word therefore on the subject. I trust that Jane may never hear so much as the name of Lord Chippenham, till she is fairly in society, and able to decide upon his merits by comparison.—She sees no young men at Ormington. Our nearest approach to a Corydon is Sir Gerald Moseley, who is forty, and has the gout.—Jane is quite safe;—and next season, should this lad's fancy dwell upon her in the interim, he will have the field before him!"—

I was about to make some civil rejoinder; but was interrupted by the servant entering the room with one of those little delicate billets which, in former days, so infallibly followed me to every dinner party, that the moment I saw

the butler enter the dining room with a small silver salver at dessert, I used mechanically to extend my hand.

I was now a little out of practice. Nevertheless, although the present little note was addressed

To the Hon^ble^

Cecil Danby,

in a hand-writing which the French called fly legged, or *à pattes de mouche*,—it produced no emotion in my heart. It was from Lady Brettingham, (that eternal Lady Brettingham!)—before opening whose letters, one was preassured they contained some interested petition.—

On the present occasion, she affected, as usual, to want something for somebody—I forget what,—probably a coronation medal.—But I felt convinced that what she *really* wanted,—and of course did *not* ask,—was to know whether I dined at my brother's, as I had that morning announced to her by way of excuse for avoiding a party at her house.

Lady Brettingham was the only person who had noticed the frequency of my visits to Grosvenor Square; the only person in whom they excited suspicion.—She detested the gentle Countess, the pure serenity of whose unobtrusive good breeding was harder to bear than the insolence of the Exclusives. Moreover a fallen angel is never perfectly at ease in presence of an angel, the brightness of whose *auréole* is unimpaired.—Lady Brettingham would have given worlds to find out any thing against Theresa.

"My compliments, and there is no answer," said I, to the butler, whose attitude was one of expectation.

For I knew that the note was fully answered by the discovery that I really dined in Connaught Place.

CHAPTER III.

How beautiful is youth!
How often, as it passes by
With flowing limbs and flashing eye,
With soul that not a care has cross'd,
With cheek that not a tint has lost,
How often, in my heart I cry,
How beautiful is youth!

WILLIAM HOWITT.

Il était tout en petites habitudes, en petits détails, en petits bonheurs, qui se répandaient ça et là dans sa conversation ; car enfin le moyen de suivre sans de grandes précautions cet admirable vagabond, qui ne sait jamais lui même où il va?—J. JANIN.

I AM sorely afraid, dear Public, that you accuse me of progressing in my story after the fashion of the automaton invented by Sir Francis Blake and Mr. Edgeworth, or some other amateur experimental philosophers, which was to acquire locomotion from the influence of atmospheric pressure, and which, at the close

of a year or so, had put its best leg foremost so as to advance the ten thousandth part of an inch.—For I cannot expect the circumstantiality of Cecil at forty, to please like the circumstantiality of Cecil at twenty-one. Even were the convolvulus bed as bright as ever,—which of you, gentle readers, would care to know the express terms of any billet likely to be addressed to me under its draperies?—

I will consequently do you the favour to pass over the tediousness of that autumn and winter; which was spent by the Mereworths at Naples, and by me in a succession of country houses assuring myself night and morning, with a punctuality worthy of themselves, that I cared nothing at all about the matter.

I was losing my time,—but what was to be done?—After that brief but emphatic letter of Lady M. it would have been direct disobedience to her commands to proceed to the Continent; —and though I own I hate English country visiting, the system has its advantages for an idle younger brother.

It was some time, moreover, since I had enjoyed any tolerable shooting or hunting. The make-believe work of the stag hounds had somewhat spoiled me for Leicestershire; and if ever I intended to enter again into the tortures of a hard day's sport, now was my time. The boys of the day,—saucy shrimps from college or the Guards,—fellows who ought to hunt in pinafores,—were beginning to wax jocular among themselves, about Cecil's style of riding, and Cecil's weight; and unless I intended to enlist at once in the brigade of veterans, it was my business to stand well that winter both at Melton and with the Pytchley.

I flatter myself I escaped the name of Old Danby by feats of very tolerable éclat, and got off cheap too, for my broken collar-bone was only the affair of a week; at the end of which, luckily for me, came a long frost, which, as is usually the case among hunting men, brought my home and family tenderly to my recollection. The domestic affections warmed in my

heart in proportion to the severity of the weather.

Even *I* was struck by the beauty of Jane when I arrived at Ormington Hall.—What more striking than the daily development of womanhood at that exquisite age of seventeen, when, as in the last few weeks that a picture lingers on the easel of an artist, masterstrokes gradually animate the canvas, and bring out the strength of the work, while a slight varnish over the whole imparts brilliancy to effects hitherto unperceived.

Does any one wish for an elaborate description of my niece?—She was of the middle height, with a profusion of rich brown hair, springing so gracefully from a beautifully formed head, as to be an ornament in itself. Her figure was slight, yet fully developed; but her peculiar charm consisted in a sort of awkward grace, if I may so describe it,—a struggling against shyness,—which every moment brought the colour to her cheek, and a

half-pleased, half-anxious expression to her eye, rendering her the very image of sensibility. Jane had not a look or gesture precisely like those of her neighbours; and the consequence was that however crowded the room, the eye was always seeking her with curiosity and attention.

Her father's sought her indeed with a degree of interest amounting almost to idolatry. Danby seemed to feel that the child was already lost to him,—that the woman would not long remain: that, no sooner seen in the world than so lovely and gifted a creature would be snatched away from his paternal arms, to consecrate the happiness of another home.—I was almost sorry for him, indeed, when I perceived how utterly he had surrendered his soul to the influence of this one affection. It was not like his usual wisdom,—his usual moderation.—Yet how could one wonder?—The loss of his wife and child had left him only this solitary tie to brighten the sterile dreariness of a public career.

Fontenelle used to say that to be happy in this world a man should content himself with being the centre of a circle two feet in diameter. The circle of which Danby felt himself to be the centre, was not much more than two dozen feet across. But though this limitation of feeling is far more distinct from egotism than the expansiveness which includes five hundred friends in the circle, it exposes the centre of such a system to greater peril of isolation.—Danby was any thing but a worldly man.—His sympathies were with the universe; —with the Gentoo in his cany shed as much as with the Parisian in his tribune at the Institute;—nay,

He was not of an age but for all time,

and Plato or Pliny were of as much account in his soul, as Robert Boyle or Sir Humphrey Davy.—But in his heart of hearts, there was no place for a human being out of his own family.

"I scarcely envy you, Ju!" said I, when, on reaching London with the father and daugh-

ter, I discussed the matter with Mrs. Herries. "You will have an anxious task of chaperonship.—Jane is handsome, rich, gentle, in every way attractive. You will have a swarm of wasps settling on the forbidden fruit."

"Why *forbidden?*" demanded my matter-of-fact sister. "My father assures me it is Danby's wish that his daughter should marry early."

"That is, Lord Ormington is himself anxious that Danby's daughter should marry early, in hopes that Danby, left alone, may be induced to find a wife in his turn. But trust *me*, both father and daughter will be difficult in their choice."

"They have a right to be so," replied Mrs. Herries, proudly.—"She is to inherit a noble fortune, and with her many charms and qualifications, ought to command one of the best matches in England."—

"May it fall to her lot!"—said I, sincerely. "Jane Danby is one of the sweetest creatures in the world. Still, she always brings to mind

Sir Brooke Boothby's pathetic epitaph on his only daughter—"the unfortunate parents ventured their whole stock of happiness in this frail bark, and—"

"Not a word more!"—cried Julia, starting up, and flinging down her work. "I defy auguries!—I have the utmost faith in the auspiciousness of Jane Danby's star.—By the way, I thought her rather pleased last night with Lord Rotherhithe, who took her out at the opera."—

"Not a word more," cried I, in my turn, "if you wish me to have any faith in your auguries or the understanding of my niece! Rotherhithe?—That stupid, ungraceful, ungracious piece of mechanism, from which one is half an hour in extracting a word, and another half hour in trying to understand it!"

"I daresay I am wrong," replied my sister, "but they certainly seemed to find no lack of topics of conversation. At all events, do not put her out of conceit with Lord Rotherhithe,

for whom Herries has the highest esteem. His manners may not be so polished as those of his brother Frank, who, by living among actors and actresses, *roués* and *femmes légères*, has rubbed off the *mauvaise honte* which obscures the good qualities of Rotherhithe; but he is fifty times more to be relied on."

"More to be relied on by Herries, perhaps," muttered I, as I left the room: perfectly aware that my pompous brother-in-law was a creature regarded by Walsingham only as a good subject for his quizzeries.—But I own I was surprised at Jane's bad taste,—for my sister was an observer whose accuracy might be strictly relied on.—

Meanwhile, I was not a little amused by a change of men and measures in Connaught Place, almost equalling the displacements occasioned in Paris by the glorious three days. —All the family connections of the late Lady Susan, all the personal friends of my brother, became assiduous in their attentions, now she

was "out," to a girl of whose existence they had heretofore seemed ignorant; and it was curious enough to see Danby, the philosophical Danby, gravely examining invitation cards, and enquiring into the merits of Almacks, very much as he would have spelt over De Lolme on the British Constitution, or studied a protocol. Nothing was beneath his notice that regarded the interests of Jane. He gave her Lady Susan's diamonds;—he *intended* to give her Lady Susan's fortune;—which mattered the less, since Nature had already endowed her with Lady Susan's sweetness and truth.—

Among those by whom the débutante was beset with civilities was Lady Grindlesham; and I noticed that Danby carefully abstained from uttering a sentence of condemnation in his daughter's presence, upon any of her new acquaintance not morally objectionable; allowing her to exercise a taste and judgment of her own.—I fear I was not equally forbearing. I could not always help exclaiming,—

"Dear Jane, I hope you don't like that fussy manœuvring Lady Grindlesham?"—or "Jenny!—don't let me hear you own that you have patience with Lady Harriet Vandeleur!" Jenny sometimes put up her pretty lip at my petulance; though on the whole I was an immense favourite.—With her, I never played the coxcomb. I was only a good and affectionate uncle, proud of her beauty, and eager for her happiness in life.—

A month had elapsed since her presentation at court; and though entering into the diversions of London after Lady Grace's fashion, soberly, Miss Danby had been the observed of all observers at several brilliant balls of the season; when one morning, on coming down to breakfast, (a meal which, as my brother was in the habit of receiving political visits at that hour, his daughter usually took in her dressing-room,) I was struck as I opened the dining-room door, by the sound of my own name. A folding Japan screen, always stand-

ing before it, compelled me to hear a few words addressed by Lord Ormington to his son, which instantly raised the leaven of my indignation.

"Just as you please, Danby," said the old Lord. "I should have thought your cruel experience on the subject, might have opened your eyes. But I tell you again, if you allow that man to remain an inmate under the same roof with your daughter, you will repent it the longest day you have to live."—

It could only be of *me* they were talking. The demerits, however flagrant, of the butler, coachman, or footman, in Connaught Place, could be productive of no great evil to Miss Danby: and it was consequently against myself that Lord Ormington was recommencing the malignities which he and the old brute Coulson had concocted together in former days.—I might have heard more, could I have stooped to the baseness of listening; but I was so moved by the generous warmth with which

Danby burst out into advocacy of his brother, that I entered the room my cheeks glowing with pleasure rather than rage.—

Lord Ormington looked like an old *ganache.* He seldom looked like any thing else;—and like Faulconbridge, I had often thanked heaven on my knees, for not condemning me to a resemblance. He soon, however, rose and sneaked away to Hanover Square; and the moment he was gone, I frankly acquainted Danby with my overhearings, and my determination to instal myself in a home of my own.—My income was a good one: I had, in fact, abided under his roof chiefly as a satisfaction to himself.—

"There seems almost a fatality," replied Danby, deeply mortified, "in the circumstances constantly arising to produce estrangement between us. I am not a man of attestations, Cecil; yet I appeal to GOD in confirmation of my assertion, that there exists not a brother more tenderly attached to brother, than

I to you. The very circumstances which alienate you from Lord Ormington, endear you to me; for, still my brother, I regard you as injured on the threshold of life;—and fraternal regard is in our case only quickened by this deeper sympathy.—Do not in return for this warm affection," said he, (et via vix tandem voci laxata dolore est,) "resent upon *me* the slights of others.—You would grieve me beyond measure by quitting my house.—Your companionship is a relief to me,—your presence a pleasure and protection to my girl. Lord Ormington's unreasonable complaints this morning arose from an idea he has taken into his head, (or which has been insinuated by that old man of the sea, Coulson!)—that you are surrounded here by your roué companions, who might form disadvantageous acquaintances for his grand-daughter.—He is not aware that my house is too little attractive to procure such visitors; and that even you, Cecil, see enough of these luccioli at your

Clubs, to dispense with them elsewhere. In short," said he, suddenly extending his hand (and so cordially, that had I been any thing but an Englishman, I must have pressed it to my lips,) " in short if you do not wish me to think of you very differently than I have ever thought since you were fifteen, do me the kindness to forget that there is a folding screen to my dining-room, and that you unfortunately overheard what was never intended for your ear."—

I complied, — *provisoirement*, — (as the French bury their dead, and build their opera houses;) but resolved, at some propitious moment, to cut short our domestic connection.

Meanwhile, the malice of those two old men had succeeded in embittering the delight of my connection with my niece. A sort of vague apprehension,—grounded perhaps upon the realization of their prophecies concerning poor little Arthur,—convinced me that I should become an innocent cause of evil to her; and now, whenever she approached me with the

gay frankness of a cordial nature, which saw in her uncle an object of affection unmingled with the respect that subdued her tenderness for her father, I recoiled from her with assumed reserve.—I often said harsh things to her,—I was abrupt,—ungracious,—disobliging.—And without effect!—All I got by it was an exclamation addressed in an audible aside to Mrs. Herries of—"Cecil, at least, does not spoil me,—Cecil tells me wholesome truths;—and I like him the better for it!—He is so candid,—so true. One is always sure there is no *arrière-pensée* in Cecil."

In reply, Julia would smile at her enthusiasm; for my sister was fond of me too, in her way. But unluckily she was so adoring a wife, that the gigantic proportions assumed by Herries in her imagination, threw a colossal shadow over the rest of the creation. My merits consequently lay in the shade; and since Herries had thought proper to cumulate with his public occupations the private duty of becoming my

conscience keeper and investigating my predilections for my neighbours and my neighbours' wives, I had so fretfully raised my quills at him whenever we met, that he retreated like a terrier after its first attempt to worry a hedgehog.—Still, in spite of our estrangement, his wife loved me too well to enter into any Ormingtonian cabals against my peace.

"My brother does indeed deal frankly with you!" she would reply,—patting her pretty niece on the shoulder.—"But I advise you, dearest, to moderate your enthusiasm when talking before strangers.—In mixed company, for instance, where every body does not know you to be uncle and niece, and his fine person and showy appearance bring him almost too nearly to a level with your age to make the connection probable,—do not call him 'Cecil,' or allow him to call you 'Jane'—nay, 'Jenny,' as I heard him do the other night before Lady Grindlesham, to her horror and amazement.—I must own, too, that I think your father wrong

in allowing you to be seen riding in the Park, alone with my brother.——"

"Attended by our two grooms," interrupted Jane,—"and only when my father is detained at the House, and comes later to join us. But surely it would be sacrificing too much to the whims of such people as Lady Grindlesham, were I to give up the society of my own uncle, and the innocent pleasure of a ride, merely because there may be people looking on in the crowd who are not aware of our relationship? What does the world give one in exchange for such unreasonable exactions?"—

"A great deal,—and in exchange for very little,—as you will learn to estimate such sacrifices to the usages of society when you grow older and wiser," replied Mrs. Herries, sententiously.

"Cecil, (I beg your pardon, MY UNCLE Cecil) —was saying the other night," observed Jane, with an arch smile, "that CUSTOM is a despot of our own creation, like the Gods which Gre-

cian sculptors carved out of stone and then fell down and worshipped!"—

"Say rather the Sovereign of an elective monarchy," said Julia mildly,—"elevated to the throne for good and sufficient reasons, and deserving respect from the moment of his coronation."—

All that Julia obtained by her lectures was, that Jenny "*Uncle* Cecil"-led me to distraction in public, whenever I had offended her.—But so far from diminishing in affection, she became kinder and more endearing than ever in her manners and deportment; for I suspect that her father had given her a hint of the animosities of which I was the object, and entreated her to make my home agreeable to me by all the means in her power.—

The means in her power, God wot, were manifold.—She was as fine a musician as Miss Vavasour;—she read French, English, Italian, and German, not as a Kemble, a Rachel, a Schröder, or a Foscolo would read,—but as an

angelic well-taught Englishwoman reads in her husband's library, while the brute is snoring on the sofa after a hard day's hunting and pretending to listen.—She talked charmingly,—that is with the freshness of a young mind hovering like a butterfly over the flowers of this world, and fancying itself the first to discover their brightness and sweetness. But she listened more charmingly still;—and though there were many inner foldings of my existence which I knew better than to unclose, I had a thousand things to tell her about Portugal and Italy,—Sicily and Greece,—very interesting to *her*, though much too simple for the sophisticated Public I have the honour to address; which cannot eat its sole without sending to Japan for the pungent condiment of soy, or swallow the honest roast mutton of its ancestors, without a filthy deluge of Lopresti's sauce.—

What pleasant mornings we used to pass in that cheerful drawing-room, with the sun

bringing forth the aroma of the geraniums and verbenas, till they filled the air with freshness;—what pleasant afternoons in the ride! Saladin stepping out as proud of Miss Danby's Little Taffline, as I of its graceful rider!—And the pleasure was certainly reciprocal. She often said she was never so happy as with uncle Cecil.—

I beseech any gentleman of my years who finds his ears tickled by a declaration of this nature from the lips of a pretty girl of seventeen,—whether kinswoman or alien,—to set himself instantly the task of discovering in what manner or by what chain of communication, he is serviceable to the interests of her secret *penchant*. "Nothing," says the French Solomon of the eighteenth century, "so closely resembles friendship, as the intimacies we cultivate to serve the interests of our Love."—

I did not suspect that I was playing catspaw to Jane,—she did not suspect it herself; but the inspirations of the Blind God who deceived

her, enabled her to deceive Uncle Cecil.—I had no grounds for suspicion. She was merely civil to young Chippenham; and the only man she *seemed* to distinguish was Rotherhithe, of whom I was certainly no advocate. But it was impossible she could like such a fellow as that!—Hannah More herself would not have been moved by the two-and-two-make-four sort of courtship of the prosy, matter-of-fact Viscount!—

All this time, my brother was luxuriating in the national prospects,—no, not the national—the human-natural prospects, opened by the accomplishment of Parliamentary Reform.—The world seemed to have grown wider to the hopes of so pure a philanthropist as Danby. Still, he "rejoiced with trembling;" as all wise men rejoice in a world where Providence, for its own great purposes, does not always allow effects to keep measure with their causes.

One had certainly heard enough and to spare for the foregoing eighteen months, of the "cri-

tical state of the public mind;"—and I fancy ministers stood in hourly terror of their places. But at that moment, alas! one began to hear for the first time of "the critical state of the public body;" till people were one and all in abject terror of their lives.—Ambitious Russia had brought back from the East more than she bargained for.—The Cholera was now an auxiliary of her armies; and having once set foot in Europe, was striding from capital to capital, as Napoleon's eagle is said to have perched from steeple to steeple, on its flight to Paris from Marseilles.—

It was an awful crisis.—The cry of "the Plague!" had been so long silent in the Western world, that our terror of that fearful scourge was become a matter of almost forgotten tradition; and modern physicians are so bebaroneted and beknighted, — wear so many Orders and issue their own with such an air of omnipotence,—that, under shelter of the College, one had begun to fancy oneself immortal.

Yet at the announcement of this fearful malady, —this death of agony and disfigurement,—the College itself grew white as its own magnesia, —confessed its ignorance,—and implored the aid of Parliament to enlighten its understanding and assist its measures.

Parliament, of course, did wonderful things,— called out "murder,"—or the militia,—or the metropolitan police,—or whatever Parliament calls out, when it gets into a funk; ay! and would continue to call out, were the great comet to approach, which is to destroy the world and both their new Houses.

But it was not Parliament alone which put on its considering cap.—The rich became suddenly solicitous about the state of the poor:— not because rebuked by the approach of judgment to come, but because misery was supposed to be the nest-egg of this brood of death. A poor family in one's neighbourhood was now a serious consideration. The little blue noses we had thought only disgusting when the result of

cold and hunger, became implements of destruction when connected with the idea of the Cholera.—The very beggarwoman who asked alms of us, might approach us with malice prepense.—There was infection in her tatters; and she had evident intentions of assassinating the man of twenty thousand a year by collapse, the sickly infant in her arms being an accessary before the fact.

We were determined, however, that the indigent classes should not work their wicked will.—In foreign countries, the populace rose in many cities where the Cholera prevailed, protesting that the authorities had poisoned the cisterns and wanted to kill off the superfluous population.—In England, the *rich* arose, (in England, it is always the rich who rise,—in parliament or elsewhere!) and protested that the lower classes wanted to Cholera them in cold blood. But with the aid of magistracy, they were luckily enabled to put down this diabolical attempt,—as the Times used to call such things

when it was in the habit of calling names. They whitewashed the cottages,—they flannel-petticoated the old women,—they inflicted worsted stockings over the barelegged,—they drenched the starving poor with mutton-broth, they filled the hungry with good things.—Blankets were forced upon the inmates of hovels by piquets of dragoons, and the Riot Act was read whenever some wretched hamlet refused to be clothed and fed.

If any one of our English artists had possessed a spark of genius, he might have designed a better parody upon Holbein's Dance of Death (which those who have not admired at Basle, have seen in the engravings of Hollar,) showing forth the Great people of Great Britain, beguiled into the virtues of Faith, Hope, and Charity, by the influence of the Cholera Morbus; a Marquis terrified into lavishing chaldrons of coal,—a Duchess panic struck into a dispensation of fleecy hosiery,—a Baronet convulsed into an emission of Welsh flannel.

All was consternation. Nothing was talked of but the Cholera.—Cajuput oil obliterated all memory of the oil of the sacred Ampulla;—and instead of distresses of the heart, the young and fair stood in awe only of pains in the stomach. Strawberries were cried aloud in the street and no man regarded; and when the more fatal fruits came into season, a handsome reward was offered by Gunter, Grange, and the united fruiterers of the metropolis, to the first man bold enough to attack an apricot:—yet even in the Spanish legion, no such hero was to be found!—Good eating was accounted a bad thing, and French cooks were at a discount. An entrée was voted felo-de-se; and, like Katherine the shrew, we were all shrieking to Grumio for beef and mustard, or even "the mustard without the beef!"—

In the sequel, we escaped better than other countries, thanks of course to our benign physicking of the poor.—Like the whipping boy kept to spare the delicate shoulders of King

Jamie, we made them our scapegoat.—Victims there were, however,—some good,—some lovely —still and ever to be remembered with regret!—

For my own part, I plead guilty to the very deuce of a fright:—

Obstupui, steteruntque comæ, et vox faucibus hæsit,

every time I read in the newspapers the announcement of some new case.

The greatest bore of the whole business, however, was the premature departure of my brother's family for Ormington Hall.—

CHAPTER IV.

Le voilà qui se passionne pour un son de voix, pour le frémissement d'une robe, pour tout ce qu'il n'entend qu' à demi, pour tout ce qu'il ne fait qu 'entrevoir. Pour cet heureux observateur des infiniment petits, il existe une obscurité plus favorable que le grand jour.

Quis accuratè loquitur, nisi qui vult putidè loqui.—SENEC.

I TRUST that not even the least courteous of my readers, (in the last century authors were obliged to call their readers courteous, just as in Austria the bond-woman is still compelled to address the uncivil free woman as "*gnädige Frau*"—but this is a longer parenthesis than is allowable to any writer short of Walter Scott,) —I say I trust none of my readers have been discourteous enough to imagine, that because I have made my fair Countess cede the *pas* for a

whole chapter to a débutante of seventeen, I had forsworn my allegiance.

If I have dismissed Lady Mereworth from my pages, she was as much as ever in my thoughts. My total de-Soph-istication was another affair.—The woman who had rejected me from her heart, I had a right to reject from my memory. *I* banished *her*.—The Vavasours had no claim upon my recollection otherwise than as people out of my orbit, whom I had made the mistake of unsphereing myself to seek, to their detriment and my own.

But I owed myself to Lady Mereworth,—albeit the debt might be little to her credit.—

By remaining in England, I was acting in obedience to her commands: and consequently as her recognized slave. If, instead of feasting on beccaficos that winter, I contented myself with humble partridge,—if, for Lachryma Christi I swallowed London particular, — if, for the glories of St. Carlos I accepted the desolation of Drury Lane,—it was

all because *she* had compelled me to "REFUSE" the invitations of her husband.—However, I knew the extent of my sacrifice,

Lætius est, quoties magno sibi constat honestum!

The usury laws do not, I trust, affect the measure of interest one may choose to exact in payment of a pretty woman.

And her hour was approaching. "The Countess was hourly expected home."—If the old porter in Grosvenor Square were to be believed, the Mereworths, who had spent the spring as well as winter abroad, were hastening to England to celebrate the accomplishment of Chippenham's majority. The Earl, though a prudent conscientious man, had not found force of mind to resist the turmoil of Reform. It had required the utmost expenditure of his strength to bring his courage to the point of joining the Reformers; and the measure once carried, like women who sink and die after producing a son and heir, his strength had given way.

From the moment the mob began to break the windows of his opponents, *he* began to shudder at the idea that his own plate glass might have been in danger; and when settled abroad, beyond the reach of my brother's mild expostulations, but not beyond reach of old Votefilch's tedious epistles or the denunciations of the Post, he grew so nervous and bewildered,—so apprehensive that the country was going down hill at a gallop, leaving him answerable for having neglected to fasten on the drag,—that Lady Mereworth, terrified lest he should commit himself with his party, if onthe spot, prevailed on him to remain abroad for the re-establishment of a constitution somewhat shattered by the late debates, foul air and foul language, of the House, under the mephitic influence of THE question. It was for this, she had ordered herself to be ordered abroad; well aware that no English*man* ever submits to expatriation on the score of health, unless in the last stage of a consumption.

They were now on their return. Instead,

therefore of fleeing from the face of the Cholera, as Jane and Danby earnestly implored me, I abided in London to await the coming of the Mereworths; and the heat of that sultry summer, scorching the pavement to a temperature which might have put the genius of Chabert the Fire King, then in his glory, to the proof, combined with a temperament holding in solution quicksilver and saltpetre in equal parts,—worried me into a high fever, long before I saw the announcement of the arrival of "The Ariel schooner, to join the Royal Yacht Squadron at Cowes."

Twelve months had elapsed since I beheld her: and, twenty years before,—when the world of beauty lay before me like a sunny meadow before a child, who, kneeling on its starry grass, plucks up the white daisies as fast as his hands can grasp them, and fancies himself able to string together a daisy garland, long enough, like Robin Goodfellow's girdle, to encompass the earth,—twelve months would have con-

tained the germ of twelve thousand infidelities.

But at my present age, twelve months was as a day!—With the exception of a foolish flashy Frederica Gray,—a dowager Miss of nearly my own standing, who all but insisted upon marrying me,—and a pretty Viscountess of whom more hereafter,—I had undergone no *very* desperate besiegement. And now that the critical hour of our re-union was striking, I had nothing, or next to nothing, on my conscience.

I could not forbear,—since neither club or coterie would detect and crow over my weakness,—from repassing in my memory, as an actor runs over the words of his part previous to appearing on the stage,—those halcyon days of the preceding summer, when I was satisfied to watch from the fauteuil in which I was lounging, the gentle form of Lady Mereworth inclining over her work;—and listen to the mild discourse reflecting her tranquil soul

as the cloudless sky pictures itself on the unruffled surface of a glassy lake.—Her movements were so noiseless, her gestures so serene, that, as one expects through the stillness of an autumnal day to hear the sound of the falling leaf as it droppeth lightly from the tree,—one felt even a passing glance from *her* as if an act of meaning and exertion.—Oh! how she must long to enchant me again with one of those glances,—how long to soothe my spirit and her own with the blandishments of ———.

But my Public is not in love; and I have no right to expect it will enter into my blissful anticipations.

To talk Goetheisms to the fashionable readers of the day, is like describing to the clerk of some wholesale warehouse in Aldermanbury, (who sees by candlelight nine months in the year, and for running brooks enjoys only the water-pipes of the Grand Junction,)—of dewsprinkled meads,—the gossamer on the thorn,—the squir-

rel on the bough,—the smoke curling from the thatch of some wood-embosomed roof among the venerable elms or sturdy oaks of the hoar forest.—*He* knoweth not the rustling of the leaves,—the fragrant dews of even,—the snatches of song speaking the reveillée of the woods, or snatches of light glimmering among their mossy branches;—and it is "the very fiend's arch mock" to tantalize his metropolitanized nature, with images of beauty he can as little apprehend as the pavement of Cheapside the freshness of May-dew!—

I can distinctly remember, even now, the perturbations of the week I waited the coming of the Mereworths!—Few but official people, who could not help themselves, remained in town,—looking ghastly as Trappists, from fear of the Cholera; while I, on the contrary, was "blushing celestial rosy red," with happy anticipations.—The Morning Post kept announcing that "the Earl and Countess of Mereworth, after a sojourn of twelve months

on the continent, were hourly expected at their family mansion in Grosvenor Square; and little did the legion of devils, begrimed and black with printer's ink, who set up the paragraph, conjecture that the fairest covey of Cupids ever hatched under the dove-like wing of Boucher, never evoked sensations so etherial as those five-and-twenty miserable words!—

At length, the grimy imps were pleased to convert "expected" into "arrived."—The family coach, looking, as family coaches usually do on their arrival from Dover on a summer's day, like some conventual penitent arrayed in sackcloth, dust, and ashes, really made its appearance; not as it quitted home, spruce, black, varnished, adorned with a lady's maid with golden ringlets and a green veil, and a well fed footman, red, white, and unctuous as a Yorkshire ham, weighing down the rumble;—but containing, in addition to my lord and my lady, a *tambour* full of *lingeries* and lace, a whisking, frisking, little *femme de chambre*,

and a ferocious Calabrian,—half chasseur, half courier,—colossal and hirsute as the ogres of that pre-utilitarian epoch of literature when fairies and giants were articles of nursery belief;—or as the effigies of Albert der Bär, in some Tedescan armoury.—

When I made my appearance next day at the door, the old porter was mechanically about to admit me, when this brute shouted from the foot of the stairs that miladi was not "veeseebeelee!"

I condescended to mention my name, as a Prince of the Blood of Prussia names himself at the Brandeburg gate of Berlin, instead of exhibiting his passport; whereupon the giant in green and gold consulted a list which he drew from his pocket, and coolly reiterated his intelligence that Lady Mereworth was "invisible." I longed to examine whether the list of favourites were inscribed in the same precious handwriting which had compelled me to "refuse" the courteous invitations of poor Mere-

worth;—but I was too indignant for words. My only comfort was that the quiet old porter who, for the last thirty years, had been ensconced in the leathern chair of the hall, like a Colchester native embedded in its shell, looked quite as angry as myself at this foreign invasion.

As I was able to calculate to a second the time at which Mereworth would take possession of a chair and the Globe newspaper that afternoon at Brookes's, I managed to be in readiness to hook myself to his arm as he proceeded homewards; rightly conjecturing that the broad flagstones would prove an irresistible attraction to a London man, returning from a year's exile on the ill-paved continent.—As we proceeded together along Albemarle Street and Berkeley Square, he told me all I knew already,—that they had passed the winter at Naples, Easter at Rome, and the four subsequent months at Paris,—and were now going to light bonfires and roast oxen at Chippen-

ham Park, in honour of their first-born; and in return for the docility with which, though a Master of Arts, I submitted to hear the alphabet recited, when we arrived in Grosvenor Square, he forced me in with him. On my pleading an indispensable engagement to render him more importunate, he insisted on my "seeing how Theresa was looking after her journey."—

I was too much absorbed in my own sensations to notice the face of the Patagonian Calabrese, as his padrone escorted me up stairs.—I even experienced the sort of agonizing difficulty of breathing endured by all who have ascended the heights of Mont Blanc, Topocatepetl, or even the vulgar altitudes of the mighty Helvellyn;—and was conscious of a vision of rushing clouds before my eyes, as described by those heroes of romance and reality, who have accompanied the "undaunted aëronaut Mr. Green" in his ascents from Vauxhall Gardens.—I doubted very much whether I

should see clear enough to make my way towards the well known north-western angle of the drawing-room which contained the shrine of my idolatry.—

Resolved, however, that no woman should boast of having triumphed over the self-possession of the CECIL of Cecils,

> Stetit aggere fultus
> Cespitis, intrepidus vultu; meruitque timeri
> Nil metuens,—

I pushed boldly forward; but instead of finding it necessary to attain the sofa in order to receive the welcome of that fairest but most indolent and least demonstrative of her sex, Lady Mereworth advanced to meet me,—with the eager courtesy and pliant series of salutations, with which a Frenchwoman in the excess of her civility, puts you out of your ease.—She offered me a chair, as if I should not have taken one as a matter of course; and inquired after my health with a methodical and unmeaning phraseology that brought the family apothe-

cary and my other Theresa cruelly to my recollection,—that is, *not* my Theresa, but Madame la Comtesse de St. Gratien.—

Instead of giving me time to utter a syllable of the charming things I had brought with me, as one brings a *cornet* of sugar plumbs on New Year's Day, the Parisianized Countess burst upon me with one of those explosions of chatter, which induce one to flatter oneself of having discovered the perpetual motion between the lips of some lovely *machine à babil* of the Faubourg St. Germain.—She was charmed and in despair,—horrified and enchanted, within the space of two minutes and a half;—agitating all the time her embroidered handkerchief and silken ringlets, and indulging in those exaggerations of word and deed, which too often convince one that when an Englishwoman catches the fever of French affectation, she has it of a more virulent kind and with greater certainty of disfigurement.—*On m'avait gâté ma bonne,—ma simple—ma doucc Thérèse!*—

But was it possible that a sojourn of only four months in the City of Frivolities could have effected this unaccountable transformation? —Alas! the mischief had been twelve in accomplishing. Uprooted from the sober habits of her life of routine, Lady Mereworth, on the Continent, was like an infant released from a go-cart and trusted to run alone on the brink of a precipice. The state of her lord's health had necessitated constant amusement. She had been doomed (by men privileged by virtue of a black coat to give bad advice,) to surround the hypochondriac with society; and the society thus assembled surrounded *her* with flatteries and adulation. It was twenty years since Lady Mereworth had been assured she was charming; and now, she heard of nothing else, and was almost amazed into believing it!—

By the time she arrived in Paris, her gentle habits of reserve and occupation had given way to the flutter of spirits produced by a perpetual round of company,—a perpetual glare of light,

—a perpetual estrangement from that better self who pores with us over a book,—listens with us to the murmurs of the summer wind,—and gazes with us at midnight upon those myriads of glittering worlds that whisper from the starry sky the infinite littleness of human nature.

Introduced at once into the heart of the choicest society of the Faubourg, Lady Mereworth was startled by the unreserve with which she was adored, and the piquant frankness with which she was assured that her *toilette* was *affreuse*, and that she must be remodelled from head to foot.

When a foreign princess is brought into France to become the bride of the Sovereign regnant and expectant, the first token of adoption given her on the frontier, is to dismiss her old attendants, reject the wardrobe she brings with her, equip her from head to foot, and surround her with a Parisian household.—Precisely similar are the evidences of good will

evinced by the fine ladies of the Faubourg towards any Englishwoman of sufficient note to be judged worthy of de-dowdification and demoralization.—

Quiet inexperienced creatures like Lady Mereworth, unaccustomed to be thus attacked and thus cajoled,—as some timid girl suddenly surrounded by a camp of gypsies surrenders the whole contents of her purse to escape in peace,—are often content to wear and bear all that is imposed upon them. But too often, the pleasure of being assured that the effect of all they are wearing and bearing is *ravissante*, that they are no longer recognizable,—that they have suddenly acquired the cestus of Venus,—that for the first time in their lives they are all they ought to have been ever since they were born,—puts them sadly in conceit with their newly acquired adjuncts;—and they return to parade in triumph in London the dress and habits they have assumed as a penance on the banks of the Seine.—

The Countess was attired in the extreme of Parisian fashion, and consequently appeared to English eyes *merveilleuse* and ridiculous. It is very possible that she attached no more importance to her present eccentric ornaments than to her former simple style of raiment. But to me, to whom all she wore was new and peculiar, there was an air of effort about both her dress and manners, singularly displeasing. Though she assured me that during her stay in Paris the prevalence of the Cholera had suspended all society, I could see from the curl of her hair and plaiting of her frills, that she had been listening to all those false and flattering protestations which her graces of person and dignities of estate were as sure to call forth, as the sunshine to elicit the sickly fragrance of the orange blossoms of the gardens of the Tuileries.

After contemplating for half an hour her newly acquired graces and fanciful costume, I saw my way out so clearly on quitting the

room, that I could have decyphered a diamond edition: and so far from finding my respiration impeded, could have performed Rode's variations, on the flute, without injury to a demi-semi quaver.—

Of all the "Victoires et Conquêtes" of the French for the last half a dozen centuries, this conquest over the simplicity of my Beatrix was the most humiliating to my Anglican pride!—

That evening, I met the Mereworths at a little party at one of the ministerial houses, still open; and was forced to confess, that, if no longer to be worshipped as an angel, Lady M. had become a more agreeable mortal by the liberalization of her views and expansion of her courtesies.—As a mere member of society, she was far more acceptable;—had more to say, said it better, and had the grace to appear more interested in the sayings of other people.—

After long sojourn on the Continent, how often have I been struck by the dowdy look

and prudish manners of that *pécore*, — that *Minerve manquée*,—Madam Britannia!—

Our fastidious writers of travels in America may be as witty as they please upon the prudery that causes the belles of New York to encase the legs of their pianos in pantaloons, talk of the limbs of tables, and recoil from allusion to any inner article of clothing; but many of the affectations of Great Britain appear fully as provincial and narrow-minded to that preponderating continent of Europe, to which she affects to give the law in all questions of Ethics and Philosophy, because able to make cheaper calicoes, and tax a wider extent of colonies for the cultivation of her indigo and coffee !——

But this is neither here nor there.

The fine ladies of Whitehall Place first whispered among themselves that Lady Mereworth was the greatest object they had ever beheld; and almost in the same breath, implored her for the pattern of every article of her dress.—But she took no note of their ab-

surdity. She was giving to Frank Walsingham and myself an account of all the oddnesses and incongruities rendering the new Court of the citizen King so much more amusing than any other Court under the sun or moon;—and ended by inviting us both down to Chippenham Park, to assist her in doing the honours of her fêtes to her country neighbours.

I was angry with her for inviting us *both*:—I was almost angry with her for inviting *me*.—Luckily, Frank was at that moment called away by Lady Brettingham; leaving me to whisper, as whisperingly as I could,—"Are you sincere in asking me?—Am I not on *this* occasion also to—REFUSE?"—

The Henry Seyton of Scott's "Abbot," when accosted by young Avenel with arch sayings comprehensible only to his sister Catherine, could not have looked more utterly blank than my fair Countess!—Was this English obtuseness, or Parisian audacity?—Resolved to satisfy myself, I pushed the question so home as to

leave no doubt upon my mind that she had forgotten every syllable about the matter.—

"I, at least," said I,—in a tone of *calinerie* of which I trusted the Faubourg St. Germain must have made her apprehensive,—"have a more retentive memory; and the book of the Coronation Service on which you deigned to inscribe the only command you ever did me the honour to address me, and the only one which could have rendered obedience irksome, remains treasured among the few possessions which I will only resign with my life!"

"Are you jesting with me, Mr. Danby?" inquired Lady Mereworth, thoroughly off her guard, and in her own old natural manner.—"I never made you a request in my life, except to dine with us occasionally; and certainly never inscribed one on a book of any kind."—

"Will you give me leave to produce it to you to-morrow," said I,—"and thus convict the imperfectness of your recollections?"—

"With all my heart,"—cried she, and so

cordially, that I saw I was under some grievously erroneous impression of one kind or other.—

I have a great mind not to go on.—It is not a pleasant thing to know that I am about to be laughed at as the most miserable of coxcombs, by the hundred and fifty thousand persons, who, the circulating libraries inform me, constitute the reading public of the memoirs of CECIL; and though I may pretend to throw the stone at myself, and utter the first laugh, as,—

> l'anima ciascuna
> Sua passion sotto 'l contrario manto
> Ricopre, con la vista, or chiara or bruna.

at least fifty thousand of the hundred and fifty, will see through the hollowness of my mirth, when they learn that the pencilled characters I had been treasuring so fondly were traced by the hand of Lady Grindlesham—who had changed books with my Countess in the

Abbey; that they were addressed as a jest to an official friend, rejecting as "REFUSE," (s. not v.) the silver medal handed to her in lieu of the gold one, for which, by similar writ of pencil, she had issued her claims to the Master of the Mint!—

I have every reason to believe, at this present writing,—now that all my illusions are laid like dust at my feet by tears of time and trouble,—that Lady Mereworth never for one moment regarded me otherwise than as a good natured harmless coxcomb, an old friend of her husband, whose club-gossip soothed her ear as she sat at work, like the tinkling of a sheep-bell, and who was always ready to rush forth and call her carriage at the Opera or Almacks,—

Tum vertice nudo
Excipere insanos imbres, cœlique ruinam!

Her red eyes had been the result of catarrhs, —her pale cheeks of indigestions.—I was a

"pyed ninny!"—I had utterly, *utterly* deceived myself!—

What had my coxcombry done to fate, that it should receive such a box on the ear as was conveyed by this humiliating conviction!—

CHAPTER V.

Dic mihi, si fueris tu leo, qualis eris?—MART.

Anon out of the earth a fabric huge
Rose like an exhalation with the sound
Of dulcet symphonies and voices sweet.
MILTON.

IT is written in history that Demophontes the butler of Alexander used to shiver in the sunshine and transpire with excess of heat on a frosty morning;—a rare exception.—I, too, I suppose, am a rare exception;—for not only

I'm never merry when I hear sweet music,

but I am never so wildly vivacious as when stung to the quick.—

I am not one of those who, (like the widow's heart after receiving a small gratuity,) *sing* for

joy. I always sing when I am angry. An old madrigal which the blind fiddlers of the London streets have rendered popular, dismisses "care" as "dull," when in fact its very essence is restlessness,—sleeplessness, and irritation.—Ease is dull,—care is lively and vocative as a grasshopper. I beg to assure my Public, that I was the very life and soul of the festivities that took place a fortnight afterwards at Chippenham Park!—

It has often occurred to me that these solemnities to commemorate the coming of age of sons and heirs, somewhat resemble the gilding of the horns and enwreathing with flowers, of a goat or lamb about to be led to the sacrifice,—or the bridal dress adorning a fair victim on the day she pronounces her vows of either matrimony or perpetual celibacy.—

Poor lad!—poor thoughtless young man!—While his future tenants are drinking his health in strong beer, and the fairest damsels of the county on tiptoe for the honour of being chosen

to open the ball with him,—while he smiles his affable smiles, and returns thanks in a neat and appropriate speech which he holds in the crown of his hat, fairly engrossed by his tutor or the family chaplain,—like the nun or bride, he is about to renounce for ever the pleasant pastimes of his youth.—As the tresses of the novice are cut off, the vanities of life are about to be shred away from his noddle. Romance is over for him,—reality beginning.—He is henceforward responsible to the laws.—He must pay his debts,—he must make no vague promises of marriage. A citizen,—a beast of burthen,—a mark for taxation,—a target for the shafts of misfortune,—for *him* the blossoms of life have already begun to shed their leaves,—leaving bitterly apparent the germ of a green and tasteless fruit, or the thorns clustering around the stem of every human destiny.—

Poor Lady Mereworth thought of none of these things.—Happier and prouder than a queen, her whole heart shone out in the looks

of delight she fixed upon her handsome young son, as he received the compliments of his county.—It was evidently the brightest day of her life. I had done her injustice. Paris had not so corrupted her nature as to weaken the influence of that strongest of human ties.

Oh, Eve!—Mother of mankind!—(to counterbalance the execrations lavished by centuries upon whose memory, the Catholics doubtless invented their worship of the Mother of endless benedictions,)—if fertility were indeed assigned to thee and to thy daughters as a penance, (which the participation of the innocent brute creation in the evil, renders a matter of doubt,) richly hath Providence counterbalanced the suffering, by the exquisite closeness of that holy tie.—Mother and child,—child and mother,—constitute the only unimpugnable and indisputable relationships of this world;—and the beatitude which Murillo and Raphael impart to the countenance of the Madonna, is but a transcript of the features of many an earthly

mother, holding her first-born child in her arms, and intensely conscious of the joy of that exclusive and enrapturing tenderness.—

While I watched Lady Mereworth infatuated by the graceful deportment of her son, I forgave her foreign footman and fantastical soubrette!

My friend Mereworth took it more gravely. Human nature is human nature; and severe entails are apt to engender sentiments in the nineteenth century, which, were new tables of the law conceded to mankind, might probably require a supplement to the fifth commandment, making it as eternally penal for noble parents not to affection their eldest son, as for the offspring of parents in general not to honour their father and their mother.

An eldest son is a natural enemy created to all men of landed estate per virtue or vice of feodal statute.—Seldom does it happen for an heir in tail to attain his majority without occasion for so gross a violation of natural law, as to have favours demanded of him by the author of his days!—

I know not what it was that Mereworth had to ask of his son; whether to cut down timber or cut off entail, or encrease or diminish mortgages. But I saw clearly that the rejoicing with which the Earl rejoiced over the roasting of the oxen and the broaching of the old October, was fifty degress less joyous than that of his wife.—The man was before him who was to fill his place; the man to whom every day that *he* lived formed a diminution of power and pleasure.—It requires a considerable stock of merit both in the parent and child, to keep out of sight this bitter fruitage of the laurels of paternity.—The woman's pride, derivative alike from husband or son,—experiences no change, and apprehends no danger from the event,—but the father whose elder son is in parliament, has already a Mordecai sitting in the King's gate.

The neighbourhood of Chippenham Park, meanwhile, which for years had been preparing its best bib and tucker for this family celebra-

tion, found almost as much cause for displeasure in the foreign changes effected in the Countess and the establishment, by the sojourn of the family on the Continent, as Mereworth in the transformation of his son-passive into his son-active.—All the steward's rooms and housekeeper's rooms within ten miles round, rose up in insurrection at the idea of Christian servants whose names were neither Jack nor Jill, and who could speak no English; and we all know the influence exercised in England by that august class of the community, whose subterraneous exhalations are fatal as those of the Grotta del Cane.—

Verso pollice vulgi
Quemlibet occidunt populariter!—

I look upon a regularly organized *Chambre Basse* in a lordly mansion, as a sort of invisible galvanic battery, the wires of which, harmless to the eye as bell wires, convey an electric chain and a series of shocks, through every cranny of the house.—

The Squires and squiresses, Baronets and baronetesses of that part of the country, accordingly, looked as suspiciously upon poor dear Lady Mereworth, as if she had brought the infection of the cholera in her Parisianized garments;—and there was a certain want of cordiality in the fête, which would have ended in a decided *fiasco*, but for the noble spirit of young Chippenham and the elegant urbanity of Cecil Danby.—Our united efforts availed to put matters *en train*.

Very few people appreciate, unless by experience, the amount of such efforts requisite to produce even a moderate degree of emotion in any well-bred assemblage of the Great British.—The French generals who, every now and then on the retreat from Russia, on requiring a brigade to advance, and issuing the word of command again and again without result,—perceived that half a dozen battalions of the men under their command were stark and stiff, frozen to the spot, like so many molds of

Gunter's fresh strawberry,—may have experienced the sensation. But it is a thing which, like the effort of addressing the House of Commons, or singing a cavatina in the French opera house, must be felt to be apprehended.

And this is the very thing the English are proud of! As the peacock, when admired for its plumage, is apt to solicit further laudation by a screech, our loving country people are sure to put forward for praise what they call their solid good sense,—that is their imperturbable phlegm!—It may be a safeguard.—The times we live in are rattling times; and between the influence of railroads and balloons,—Lucifer matches and Prussic acid,—we should perhaps be tunnelling our way to the Antipodes and finding out some North-West or other illicit passage to Hades, but for the preventive check of our holy and wholesome national apathy, the great drawback-duty of the realm: thanks to which, we are Europeanly admitted to be the most steady and the least ready of the colloquial nations of the Old or New world.

With respect to our conversational deficiencies, however, I have a theory of my own!—The superior wittiness of the French had evidently its origin in the despotism which created Versailles, and put the press in irons. During a couple of centuries, the bon-mots that enlivened the petits soupers of Paris, would, had their authors written as they talked, have necessitated an enlargement of the cells of the Bastille; and the habit of emitting these parlous squibs and crackers in conversation, originated a tone of small-talk which, in England, took the shape of the Draper's Letters, the Two-penny Post-bag, and the periodical literature of the day.—There is not half the brilliancy in the *causeries* of Paris since the liberations of the revolution of July; and I suspect that it needs only to transfer a right *earnest* adaptation of the Hanoverian laws to Great Britain, to make Marylebone talk as Fonblanque writes, or stimulate the dinner tables of May Fair with the pungent grains

peppered over these animated pages. The English are (between me and them) stultified by their liberty of the press.—

From Chippenham Park, I was to proceed to Ormington Hall; and could perceive from the hints of the Mereworths, they were anxious I should invite their son to bear me company. Nothing could be more awkward than the dilemma in which I was placed by this intimation.—I would not have encroached on Lord Ormington's hospitality in favour of so much as a guinea pig, to which he had not issued a formal invitation; yet I was almost as reluctant to admit to my friends the Mereworths, the limitation of my power in this particular.

I was resolved to give Danby a hint to get Lord Chippenham properly invited; but would not in the interval excite the suspicions of the family by announcing my intention.—

This was all the harder, because the Mereworths had allowed *me* carte blanche to invite my friends to their recent festivities; and

Frank Walsingham, among others, had actually accompanied me to the house.

Not but that such a fellow as Frank bore his own letters of recommendation to any society he might happen to join.—Wherever he made his appearance, it was like sunshine in winter,—like a new book in quarantine,—like one of Charley Buller's speeches after one of ——— ———'s stammers.

He sang, he talked, — laughed at other people's talking, and did *not* laugh at their singing;—he was equally ready to be amusing or amused. There was nothing solid about Frank; none of those valuably phlegmatic sobrieties to which I have been alluding as the natural atmosphere surrounding the moral excellence of Great Britain; but by cheating the sad out of their sadness, and the rigid out of their formality, he rendered an important service to society.—I do not pretend to say he was a man of genius; but I am apt to judge of causes by effects.—The battle of Minden was chiefly won

by a regiment raised by General Elliot among a strike of discontented tailors. But the victory was not the less a victory; though the tailors had ceased to be tailors. After hearing Frank Walsingham keep a table of parliamentary men, and others of the sages of the day in a roar, I always forgot that he was a dunce.

Unluckily, he was apt to make his friends roar with sorrow as well as mirth. Frank was a perpetual getter into mischief; and not only did wrong things, but did them in the wrong way.—If engaged in a spree, it was sure to find its way into the newspapers; if on his knees before some actress or dancer, the curtain drew up and discovered him,—figuratively speaking, let me add—lest the public should have a fit of matter-of-factitude. His priggish brother, Lord Rotherhithe, used to undergo fifty-two martyrdoms per annum through the publicity of poor Frank Walsingham's escapades. —The women, however, "looked in his face till they forgot them all."—I should have been

very sorry, even in my Emily Barnet days, to have hazarded rivalship with Frank.—

On arriving at Ormington, I had reason to wish he had accompanied me,—for we were sadly in want of a cheerer.—The death of Scott, of whom Danby was a personal friend and correspondent, threw a damp over the fireside he had more than once brightened by his intelligence, and warmed by his cordiality; and Jane, who could of course fully enter into the blank created in the soul of her father by such a loss, was glad to escape from the saddened circle, and assail me with thousands of questions touching the gay party at Chippenham Park.—

I was as much startled as pleased by the frankness with which she cross-questioned me concerning the way in which Chippenham had acquitted himself.—In *my* time, girls were slyer or more reserved. It struck me that Helena Winstanley would never have examined Sir Moulton Drewe concerning *my* exploits at

Edinburgh, in the cool decided manner in which Jane, while sauntering arm in arm with me through the home wood at Ormington, allowed herself to talk about Chippenham Park.—It is true, she mentioned the name of Rotherhithe quite as often as that of my friend Mereworth's son and heir. But *that* was evidentally a blind.—It would have been as possible to attach a tender sentiment to one of the figures on the clock of St. Dunstan's, as to Rotherhithe. — Though, Heaven knows! — There is no accounting for tastes:—

> Sua cuique quum sit cogitatio
> Colorque privus.—

—Madame de Stael fancied Rocca, Rousseau Thérèse, Byron Marianna.—But no!—it was impossible that a graceful gracious creature like Jane, could fancy a man whose only recommendation on the face of the earth consisted in the number of acres thereof, over which he was eventually to exercise his droits territorial.

Still it was strange that, unless she *did* like him, she should be so much concerned at the annoyance he must be feeling at an exposure which just then took place, of one of the public scandals too often involving the name of his brother Frank.—As Jane truly observed, the respectability of the old Earl of Walsingham and his better-conducted son, had to suffer in general estimation for the delinquincies of one who seemed to take as much pleasure in getting into scrapes, as others in getting out of them.

The present exposé arose out of an affair of far from recent occurrence. A suit at law between a celebrated actress and her husband, had produced recriminations and the publication of letters; among which, those indited by Frank, six years before, in his boyhood, were paraded before the public.—The letters of all boys are ridiculous,—the love-letters of most men are ridiculous; and those of poor Frank consequently displayed a double

dose of absurdity. Moreover the lady to whom they were addressed, though young and pretty when the heroine of my friend, was now *passée* both in appearance and public estimation; and the figure cut by Frank Walsingham was consequently absurd as well as disreputable.—As Jane observed, the mortification of his family must be complete.—

Not that a girl educated like my brother's daughter had either perused the letters, or become aware of the true state of the case. But from the dinner-table-chat at Ormington Hall, she learned that Frank had been disgracing himself in some very public manner; and certain passages of the letters, which were cited in the papers and had become proverbial for their absurdity, were frequently quoted in her presence.—I could not but agree with Jane that my friend Frank must have been the cause of great annoyance to his sober brother; and, like herself, almost wondered he had found courage to show himself on an occasion so

very public, as the festivities at Chippenham Park.—

The truth was that this courage did not proceed from audacity, but from a genial joyous spirit, over which the *qu'en dira t'on* of society had little influence. Aware that the folly in which those letters had their rise was a boyish weakness, long since repented and atoned, the exposure scarcely concerned him more than if attached to some other person.—The Frank Walsingham of nineteen *was* in fact a different man from the Frank of five-and-twenty; and the Frank of five-and-twenty too sunshiny a fellow, too happy and happy-making, to trouble his mind whether Bloomsbury turned up the whites of its eyes at his early backslidings, or even whether his moral brother Ro— the Joseph Surface of the family, judged it necessary to address a letter to his constituents, assuring them that "*a* son of the Earl of W—ls—m alluded to by the Sunday papers was not *the* son who had the honour to repre-

sent them in parliament." Jane Danby perfectly approved of her protegé Lord Rotherhithe's protest. For *my* part, I felt that in this instance, as in all others, he acted like a prig.—

I could not help telling her one day, that it would cost me a pang to bestow upon her the benediction of an uncle, when she knelt at my feet as Viscountess Rotherhithe; a threat which the gypsy presumed to receive with a conscious blush, not unaccompanied by a smile, as if she attached very little importance to my opposition!—

Aber was ihr sanftes ange spricht
Sängen selbst Petrarch und Sappho nicht!—

There was, however, some excuse for the toleration with which Jane endured even mention of such a lover; for truth to say, the neighbourhood of Ormington Hall afforded the very type of Great British provinciality.—As Danby had once irreverently observed in my

presence, the nearest approach to a Corydon was forty years old!—But the forty of a hunting Baronet, who hunts hard, drinks hard, and breathes hard after drinking and hunting, is not the forty of a well got up London man, who looks clear-starched as his own shirt, and whose waist is as slender as his means;—and the Sir Gerald Moseley in question, *animalâtre* as he was, was perfectly assimilated with his neighbourhood, which was that of a hunting country in all its odiousness and inde-fence-ability.—

The twaddling at the dinner-table in Connaught Place was,—compared with that of Ormington Hall, as the liveliness of the mill-wheel to the stagnation of its pool.—Remote from any high road or commercial town, the district did nothing but hunt one half the week, and talk about it the other. Its jovial county squires, and *their* aristocracy the country Baronets, (including poor Helena's father Sir Gabriel, the red-nosed Nestor of the field,) were

men who appeared to have been born in leathers and deserved to be buried in them :—(and why not, pray, if Knights Templars of old were inhumed in the coats of mail attesting their prowess?)—But by Jove! there was as much difference between their sportsmanship and that of Belvoir or Cottesmore to which *I* was accustomed, as between a dinner at the table of Lord Sefton, and a gobble at that of the Lord Mayor!—

As to myself, I possess, under such circumstances, the happy faculty of self-concentration; and can film over the brightness of my mind as parrots the brightness of their eyes, while boored or bored to death among people who indulge in local jokes incomprehensible in the next parish, and dig one in the ribs in order to point their meaning.

With serene complacency did I accord my ear to any amount of squirearchical brag they chose to inflict upon me; but I own I *did* wonder, when the Mereworths and their son came by Danby's invitation to spend a few

days at Ormington on their way to Heaton, that my niece should so little recognize her good fortune in exchanging the red faces and tuneless voices of those uncivilized suppressors of the fox, for the lively and graceful manners of one of the finest young men in England.—

Boys, however, have seldom much success with an intelligent, discriminating girl.—Jane was too much accustomed to the good sense of her father and the good manners of her uncle, not to perceive a certain want of self-possession in Chippenham's air and ideas, which necessarily inspired her with notions of her own superiority.—Now, though a woman of the world, such as Clémentine de la Bélinaye, may be aware of her advantage in superiority over her husband, the affections of a girl, like the fibres of the ivy, flourish by ascent; and require the support of a superior object to sustain their growth!

Lady Mereworth was as angry with me as

her gentle nature would admit, for insinuating to herself and her husband, that a proposal on the part of Chippenham would be premature. —It was not for *me* to tell them in the plain words, as odious in our land's language as its plain cooks, "Jane will certainly refuse him!" —But I advised him to "take time;"—and to recommend time-taking in love-making to a warm-hearted lad of one-and-twenty and his adoring mother, is much like advising a pistol, when drawing its hair trigger, to reflect seriously previous to explosion.

I was amused to perceive that, if Chippenham's society proved less attractive to my niece than might have been expected, Ormington Hall appeared to *him* a bower of bliss.—Oh! exquisite bewilderment of the soul, which had formerly converted Southampton Buildings for *me* into Grosvenor Square, — and didst then invest for poor Chippenham, those eating, drinking, snoring, knights of the kennel, with the graces of mind and person of

Ariosto's knights,—why—why, must every fleeting year bear off upon its wings a hue from the prismatic charm reflected from thy burning lens upon the dreariness of human life!—

Oh! could I only fall in love again, or find a bottle of claret to my taste!—Make the most of your time, boys!—Etonians and Ceritonians, clap your hands and rejoice, while ye can;—

Gather your rosebuds whilst 'tis May!—

Enjoy, while the sun shines, that best of wisdom which old folks are fools enough to call folly!—

Never do I turn from reminiscences of my early Cecil-ian bliss, when the happy moments dropped from my hand like pearly drops from the braided hair of a sea nymph, reflecting sunshine as they fell,—to make war upon Time as I now behold it, dull, heavy, cumbrous as a President of the Council,—without recalling to mind the laborious efforts of another

hapless criminal, condemned to a task equally overwhelming :—

Καὶ μὴν Σίσυφον εἰσεῖδον, κρατερὰ ἄλγε ἔχοντα,
Λᾶαν βαστάζοντα πελώριον ἀμφοτέρησιν.
Ἦτοι ὁ μὲν σκηριπτόμενος χερσίν τε ποσίν τε,
Λᾶαν ἄνω ὤθεσκε ποτὶ λόφον, ἀλλ' ὅτε μέλλοι
Ἄκρον ὑπερβαλέειν, τότ' ἀποστρέψασκε Κρατα ιΐς.
Αὖτις ἔπειτα πέδονδε κυλίνδετο λᾶας ἀναιδής.

CHAPTER VI.

Eccoti, benigno lettore, un parto di poche sere, che se ben nato di notte, non è pero aborto di tenebre; ma si farà conoscere figlio d'Apollo, con qualche raggio di Parnasso.

NICOLINI.

Get money,—money still,
And then let merit follow—if she will.

POPE.

BLESSED be they who, for the benefit of the younger brotherhood of this glorious and favoured island (*cheers from the Treasury benches!*) keep open house at their country seats from Christmas till Easter.

That year, and many years succeeding and preceding, did I manage to get rid of myself at the cost of my own time and the venison of my noble friends, the Earl of B——, and the Duke of A——, and so forth, to whom it was

essential during the hunting season that their dinner table should be surrounded by well-known faces, reflecting honour and glory upon their fare and fair.—Blessed, I say again, be they who, at a season of the year when other capitals concentrate their population for social enjoyment,—defying frost or rain in crowded theatres, or brilliant ball-rooms, whose blazing illumination supplies the deficiencies of sunshine,—offer premiums for the encouragement of attempts at sociability in some isolated castle, posted like a dunce in disgrace for example sake, on the top of a hill; where people, eat, drink, hunt, and shoot, at the expense of their entertainer, repaying him on their return to town by filling the clubs with attestations of the merits of their entertainment. I really do not believe it cost either the Duke or Earl much more than twenty thousand a year a piece, to have it said in London that their country house was not a bore.

I had now progressed to the time of life when one becomes conscious that such masters of country seats deserve well of their country. —No longer young enough to be put off by the groom of the chambers with a smoky room, or dressing-room near the offices within sound of smoke-jacks, or smell of Jacks who smoke, —no longer young enough to be made a target for the attacks of pretty women or witty men, —no longer an object for practical jokes, or practical earnest, I had progressed into one of the walking gentlemen of such parties.—I was CECIL,—*there* to be amused, not to be amusing;—CECIL, whose arrival looked well in the newspapers,—CECIL, with his own particular room,—his own particular chair,—his own particular vintage,—the protégé of stewards, butlers, and housekeepers;—the Mr. Danby against whose arrival a particular buck was set apart by the gamekeeper;—the Mr. Danby who enjoyed among the housemaids the privilege of a certain number of extra jugs of hot

water per diem; and during whose stay the breakfast bell, per connivance of the servants' hall, was rung half an hour later than usual.—

All this was pleasant enough. My club seemed to tour it out of town with me, in my easy chaise. Still, one must not hope to *cumuler les bénéfices dans ce bas monde;* and I admit that, if sure of a better bed-room and calmer repose under its curtains, I was by no means so certain of depriving the pillows of others of their rest, as in the times when I was put up among the cubs of Bachelor's gallery.

Well do I remember how every night when the female kind had shut up their work-boxes, and were retiring from the drawing-room, the last look cast from the door by one or more of that bevy of fair faces, invariably singled me out, like a *dear* from the herd;—and delightful it was to snatch up a book or newspaper, to conceal my observations and emotions from the brothers, lovers, husbands, around me; all

jealous,—all mistrusting me,—all grinding their teeth, or muttering between them,

Quo teneam vultus mutantem Protea nodo?

And then, on coming in to breakfast—ten minutes later than the rest of the party,—to observe the number of chairs pushed aside to make way for me;—the number of faces blushing the invitation they dared not speak;—the number of eyes cast down on their tea-cup or muffin when I had deigned to make my election, in order to conceal their looks of mortification or despair!—The manœuvres, too, when there were meets on the lawn;—the stratagems to be crossing the hall when I had talked of being home early from shooting!—

And now,—my place at breakfast was regularly assigned by the butler near the fire, and out of the way of draughts; and when I took it, every woman of them looking me smilingly in the face, and asking me how I had slept,—feeling as little delicacy on the subject as

in alluding to the sleep of the spaniel on the hearth-rug!—As to meeting me in the hall, if some stray girl or graceful matron *did* occasionally rush towards me and lay her hands detainingly on the arm of my shooting jacket, it was sure to be to ask whether Frank Walsingham had had good sport, or whether I had left Chippenham near the house? — So far from finding occasion for concealing my face at night behind the Morning Herald, a bijou almanack would have secured all the blushes likely to be called into my cheeks by the Parthian darts of those retreating beauties!—

All this, however, at least consolidated the commodiousness of my country quarters. I excited no jealousies,—I created no dissatisfactions. I was asked from house to house. One invitation foretold another, and one engagement certified another.—I glided in like a shadow.—I amalgamated like a medium tint with old or young; and thus perhaps enjoyed the summum bonum of middle-aged human felicity.

But alas! the greatness of my reputation stood my foe.—People would not let me subside quietly into innocuousness. The young fellows kept reminding me that it was absurd to degenerate into the slippered pantaloon, so long as one boasted such a leg for a boot;—and *would* persist in calling me "old fellow!" a term of endearment never hazarded to fellows really old.—

After all, perhaps I *had* no right to withdraw myself so early from active service. Potentates who abdicate prematurely, are apt to yearn in their retreat after the sceptre they have renounced.—It was too soon for egotism; "*Jouir, c'est la sagesse, faire jouir, c'est la vertu;*" and let the *Instruction Publique* say what it might to the contrary, I was always virtuously inclined.—

In consideration, therefore, of my duty towards the public,—the fairer moiety of course, the other half can take care of itself,—I resolved, if no longer worthy to frisk as a

subaltern in Cupid's corps of light infantry, at teas, to figure as a field officer.—Says I to myself—(as Cardinal Richelieu did when he gave away a place) I will make a thousand discontented and one ungrateful.—"Connubio jungam stabili." It is high time we should marry.—Let us look out for an heiress.—

It is a singular circumstance, that, though the modest virtues have neither a place in the Court Guide, nor any other list of the notabilities of fashion, every body keeps a catalogue of heiresses.—A sort of club census determines the existence and whereabout of this valuable portion of the female population; and it needed only to hint the question in St. James's Street, to be furnished with a list like a house agent's memorandum of HOUSES TO BE LET FURNISHED. —I swore, of course, as people used aforetime when on the look out to purchase a seat in Parliament, that I was commissioned by a friend; and was instantly assured that my friend would find the very thing to suit him in the only

daughter of a Lady Crutchley,—the widow of an East Indian K.C.B.,—whose vast personality and noble mansions in Bruton Street and Tchindagore Park were waiting to make some unlucky dog the happiest of men,—*i. e.* a man of ten thousand a year.—

I promised to mention her to my friend; and Cecil Danby accordingly thanked me that night as he was winding up his watch, in no measured terms, for my prompt attention to his interests.—

There was no great difficulty in getting presented; and already I had determined to afford the heiress of Tchindagore an opportunity of disposing of herself to the best advantage. Miss Crutchley was no longer in her *première jeunesse*, (as one says when one wants to be civil about a dowager miss, who, like Flora Gray, has almost survived her second,)—and was what is called an amazingly fine woman; a phrase usually intending to designate a woman whom it is amazing any one should

call fine, inasmuch as she is singularly coarse. Her name was Marcia; and like her namesake she "towered above her sex;" but though the premises were alarming, the giantess subsided into a pocket Venus the moment I betook myself to arithmetic and un-common sense for admeasurement of her charms.—

The virtuous Marcia, was not a person to be had for asking for.—She had been asked for too often not to suspect that, in this unproposing age, the adoration to which she was perpetually subjected was that of the Molten Calf.—Suspicion, however, (and "suspicion's at the best a coward's virtue,") did not tend to improve either her temper or complexion. Even her bloom was redolent of Lombard Street; and though

> Lurida præterea flunt quæcunque tuentur
> Arquati,

it is not pleasant to see one's rose blush like a primrose, or the chick of one's heart look like a guinea chick; though by the way, Messrs. Del-

croix and Atkinson might perhaps inform one the variety of shades of complexion compassable by the pin-money appropriate to ten thousand a-year.

It was not, however, the complexion of the heiress that put me so much to the blush. — Though her manners were free from vulgar assumption, there was a frigid calculating self-estimation about her,—a sort of if-from-ten-thousand-a-year-you-take-ten-thousand-a-year kind of process perpetually going on in her mind, that deadened its better faculties. *But* for the ten thousand a-year, I suppose one should have troubled oneself little about her faculties, dead or alive; but

Inde faces ardent, veniunt a dote Sagittæ.

She reminded me of the rock called the Ara Bacchi, in the bed of the Rhine, which one salutes with respect because visible only when the river is low, the season dry, and the vintage promising.—People were glad to see

her, because corn, wine, and oil were in her train.—

In more respects than one, however, did she resemble the said altar of Bacharach; she was as hard as a rock! There was a poor relation living in the house, a little girl of sixteen, called Mary—(Thompson—Johnson—Brown—Smith—I know not—she was only called Mary,) whose business it was to pick up Lady Crutchley's pocket handkerchief, open the door for the Dutch pug, read the newspaper to the old lady, and write notes for the daughter,—whom the virtuous Marcia invariably addressed in a spirit of nigger-driverishness worthy of Richard Greysdale.—The poor child did not seem to mind it;—a proof only that she was used to nothing else.—It was no business of mine;—*my* business was with the banker's book of the heiress.

I had fully expected, in derogating to the society of an East Indian widow, to find myself thoroughly *désorienté*.—But to my great amaze-

ment, I discovered, on occasion of their first grand dinner party, that half the fine gentlemen of White's were beforehand with me; and half the fine ladies, their mothers or sisters, enlisted in the same shabby cause.—I met at Lady Crutchley's the best company in town. Like Lovegold, in our English version of L'Avare, they agreed with me in exclaiming, "In short, Lappet, I must touch, touch, touch, something *real!*" — Like any other Golden Image whose worship is attended by the sound of sackbut, harp, lute, psaltery, and all kinds of music, multitudes were bowed down around the heiress!—

Meanwhile, I had put my intentions into effect of removing from Connaught Place, on pretence that the distance from St. James's Street was inconvenient; and was now proprietor of a snuggery on the wrong side of St. James's Place; where I could hear the sparrows of the Green Park twitter so distinctly, that, prospered in the exercise of my imagination by

living opposite to Rogers, I managed to fancy myself overlooking Constitution Hill.—

The only method by which I could reconcile Danby to my change of domicile, was to dine with him whenever I was free from other engagements; which, sooth to say, was seldom the case.—But when I *was* able to join the family party, it grieved me to perceive that paternal anxieties were making more havoc in my brother's constitution, than all the labours of his public career or cares of his private.—It was passing strange; but Danby, who had taken such pleasure in his daughter's education as a preliminary to the part she was now playing in the world, seemed to find nothing but thorns in the garden of roses he had been cultivating.—

Whoever approached his lovely daughter, became a source of trouble to him.—*He* knew the peculiar delicacies of her nature,—the refined elegance of her mind; and trembled every moment lest by those assiduities so fasci-

nating to a very young girl, her affections should become entangled by some person not every way worthy to become her companion for life.—Readily perceiving that Chippenham was little favoured, he resigned with a sigh the hope of a nearer alliance with the Mereworths; —but *who* was to be the man?—

Herries was the very fellow to stimulate these paternal susceptibilities.—Issued of an official family which, from generation to generation, had risen from doorkeeper to clerk, from clerk to secretary, from secretary to commissioner, from commissioner to M.P. and Privy Councillor, the character in which my brother-in-law now figured in the Treasury Annals, Herries was troubled with a sort of hereditary legislative fever, inspiring him with the notion that the affairs of individuals, as well as of the nation, could not be too closely tied up with red tape, and deposited in tin boxes.—His idea of human life was a series of documents; and he seemed to fancy that if Danby desired his daughter to

marry either Chippenham or Rotherhithe, he had only to give notice of a motion to that effect.—With sufficient whipping-in, a division would decide the question.—

Whenever they met, therefore, which was oftener than ever in consequence of the maternal care bestowed by my sister Julia upon her niece, Herries kept harassing his brother-in-law with hints about Sir John This, or Captain That, and begging him to keep an eye upon the attentions of a detrimental like Frank Walsingham. On any other subject upon earth, Danby would have been urged to all eternity without degenerating into the meanness of mistrust.—But on this, his heart and soul were "tremblingly alive all o'er" to the perils and dangers encompassing the transition from maidenly to matronly estate, in the being most dear to him in the world.—

Who would love her as *he* had loved her?—Who would watch for her,—pray for her,—as *he* had watched and prayed?—Who en-

compass her path with guardianship, lest at any time she should dash her foot against a stone?—From her very childhood *his* eye had been suffused with tears whenever her own were moistened; trembling when she approached the verge of danger, and rejoicing with exceeding great joy whenever a remote prospect of good brightened for her in the distance.—What husband would do all this?—What man *deserved* to be her husband, among the frivolous sensualists or interested egotists of the day?—poor feeble beings,—defective in head and heart,—and deriving their charm from some accidental grace of manner, or a judicious selection of tailors and perfumers!—

"If you do not want to see your daughter throw herself away on some empty dandy, who will give her an opera dancer for rival, or waste her fortune at the hazard-table, beware the wild companions of your brother Cecil!"—had been the warning of Lord Ormington.—

"If you do not wish to see poor Jane de-

vote her affections to the vizard found by Æsop's fox, a good-looking face without a particle of brains, beware of Frank Walsingham!" —was now the more explicit admonition of the officious Herries.—

And Danby thus appalled, not only refrained from inviting poor Frank into his house, but was perpetually bringing home Rotherhithe to dinner, upon the suggestion of Julia and her husband that, the two brothers never frequenting the same society, to establish the Viscount by his fireside was certain banishment to Frank.

The banishment, in the present instance, was copartite:—for Cecil made his bow as well as Walsingham.—The arrival of the elder brother was just as great an annoyance to me, as the departure of the younger.—I admitted that Danby had a right to exercise his judgment in the selection of his guests, but wished he would exercise his own judgment instead of that of Herries.—

Repelled from Connaught Place by the presence of Lord Rotherhithe, and attracted to Bruton Street by the weighty considerations attached to Miss Crutchley, I now saw less than I desired of my brother and niece.—Hear of them, I did, wherever I went. It was generally allowed that Miss Danby was the beauty of the season,—and her father the only man capable at that moment of throwing a golden bridge of conciliation over the great gulph seething and frothing between the people and the throne. Whether in club or coterie,—whether among the diners out who digest their arguments with their cutlets, or the droppers in who concoct wisdom or pass judgment from an ottoman and satin divan, like the Chancellor from the Woolsack or Bishops from the Bench,—opinion was unanimous in favour of the superlative distinctions attending the family of Danby.

Duly grateful for the general favour conceded to my brother and niece, I was not the

less so from being aware that the first lustre shed upon the family name, arose from my own prominence among the oracles of fashion,—as the gilt figure-head of a noble vessel first strikes the vulgar eye, and gives a name to the more substantial structure.—

Frank Walsingham often used to laugh with me at the sudden odiousness he appeared to have acquired in the eyes of my brother.—

"Danby has not asked me to the house for months!" said he, one day, towards the close of the season.—"I dare say it is Ro.'s doing. Ro. cannot bear the familiar way in which I presume to approach his pedestal.—It don't much matter,—now that *you*, Cis, have cut the family concern, and that my brother has bored his way into the house, it is not a jot better than other family mansions where the cook is English and the conversation Greek to me.—So come along to the rehearsal,—or we shall miss Malibran!"—

Such was the man they fancied intent upon entangling the affections of Jane!—

"If you could but imagine, uncle Cecil," she one day whispered to me, in her turn, as we stood together a moment at the Water Colour Exhibition, while Danby was inquiring the price of one of De Wint's fine landscapes,—"if you could but imagine how much less agreeably my life has passed since you left Connaught Place!—Grandpapa and my uncle Herries do not allow my father a moment's rest on my account. I dare not mention any new partner before them, lest my grandfather should take down Collins's Peerage to investigate the origin and alliances of his family. If satisfactory, off he goes to aunt Julia; and Mr. Herries is instantly posted off to Arthur's, while grandpapa proceeds to Boodle's, to enquire into the poor man's habits and character! —Surely *every* girl is not beset in this absurd manner?—I am beginning to feel so *génée* and awkward when any young man addresses me in society, from the certainty that Mrs. Herries will be cross-questioned on the morrow, and

that my manner, if commonly civil, will give rise to one of these family discussions, that I feel no pleasure in a ball-room. — Fortune, family, politics, morals, every particular relating to any unfortunate individual rash enough to ask me to dance, is passed through the sieve; and did my partners only surmise to what an ordeal they were exposing themselves, they would sooner stand for Westminster or be ballotted for at White's !"—

" Poor Jenny !" said I,—pressing her arm.— " She almost deserves it though, for preferring such a mule as Rotherhithe, to a high mettled racer like my young friend Chippenham."

" I do not happen to like Lord Chippenham," replied my niece, more gravely than was her wont,—" but I beg you will not therefore do me the injustice to suppose that ——"

Her father at that moment approached us; which might account for the faltering of her voice, and variation of her colour.—

" To suppose *what?*" said I,—whispering

almost as if addressing some idol of my own.—

"That any friend of my uncle Cecil can be an object of indifference to *me!*"—rejoined my niece, in a hurried manner.—

Poor girl!—the assurance was unnecessary. —I was fully aware of my influence over her opinions.—I only wish that my brother would have allowed himself to feel equally secure.—

Fathers have flinty hearts,—no tears can move them,

gasps Romeo, in his dying moments; and though loth to coincide in any opinion contained in an emended edition of Shakspeare, I suppose we young folks are bound to say Ditto. But I will be hanged if fathers have flinty *heads!*—for you may hammer at them till the day of judgment without eliciting a spark.—The heads of parents, (which I appear to be dragging in like cod's heads, by the head and shoulders) resemble the retina of the human eye, wherein all possible objects are reflected in an inverted position. Scarcely a

father or mother of my acquaintance but sees topsy turvy, in all matters connected with the destinies of their children.—

Danby was certainly one of the ablest men in England. Nobody could doubt it who heard or read his speeches, though I have heard more than one well-drilled blockhead, speak like Cicero.—Yet in the matter of his daughter, he was as great a goose as Brabantio.—By inflicting Rotherhithe upon her as her *pain quotidien*, he was making her detest the Viscount as very dry bread indeed; and fret after her uncle Cecil's friend Lord Chippenham, from mere opposition!

I could not help saying as much that night at the opera to Frank Walsingham, as we sat together in the Omnibus; and though he only shrugged his shoulders in reply, I saw him raise his glasses towards Mrs. Herries's box, and fix his eyes upon poor Jane, full of compassion for a girl so tormented by the want of judgment of her friends!—

CHAPTER VII.

Like to a wayward child, whose sounder sleep
Is broken by some fearful dream's affright.

SPENSER.

——— Remove fera monstra, tuæque
Saxificos vultus, quæcunque ea, tolle Medusæ.

OVID.

Dum potuit, solita gemitum virtute repressit.

IBID.

"ALL this, however, was not Magdeburg!" as Napoleon used to say of the compliments whereby he beguiled the unfortunate Queen of Prussia from the purport of the interview she condescended to seek of him in hopes of regaining that precious fortress;—and I fear it will be only too apparent to my readers that I am entering into my niece's love affairs to avoid the discussion of my own.—

I cannot say that it *is* particularly pleasant, after having figured as Pyramus to one or more of the prettiest Thisbes in the world, to find that one's better half is likely to conjoin as unsuitably with one's personal merits, as when on the stage by some blunder of the scene-shifter, half a palace is made to unite with half a hovel. — In earlier life, I was never desirous there should be a CECIL-ia.— One of us was enough!—But when, in occasional paroxysms of romance, I *did* conceive the possibility of sitting in an opera box, over the door of which was inscribed in golden letters

THE HONOURABLE MRS. DANBY,

the face of the fair creature, occupying the chair opposite me in front, was invariably that of one of Greuz's transparent darlings, in whose veins the circulation of the blood is perceptible, and whose mother-of-pearly skin would put a lily to the blush.—And for lily, to be obliged to read daffodil! — For that delicate Ariel of my mind's eye, to behold a

stupendous creature wanting only a coronet of towers to form a fitting representative of the substantial Cybele, that mighty mother of cities and market towns.—

I had not paid my court to Miss Crutchley many weeks, before I grew positively afraid of her,—and strange to say, equally afraid of declaring off.—She looked so majestically determined to have me, that I felt like Grildrig within the grasp of Glumdalclitch.—By the time I had been sitting half an hour in Bruton Street, I used to find my ideas becoming transfixed. I, so fluent, so colloquial elsewhere, had not a word to say for myself. Whether Lady Crutchley stalked in or out of the room, or whether Marcia smiled on me or frowned, made no difference in my emotions. Their air of lofty superiority froze me to the centre.—The only diversification of my unpleasant feelings was irritation to see with what insolence the haughty heiress flourished her golden ferule over the shoulders of little Mary, to

whom none of them seemed to concede the sensibilities of a human being.—

" Mary, what do you mean by leaving the door open !"—

" Mary, what do you mean by letting the fire out !"—

" Mary, what do you mean by neglecting to answer that note !"—

" Mary, what do you mean by forgetting to wind the blue worsted !" formed the only mode of address in which I ever heard the poor girl reminded of her existence.

On leaving the house, I invariably made up my mind to insinuate to Lady Crutchley or her daughter the following day, that the habits of life acquired on the banks of the Hooghly could not be too carefully laid aside on those of the Thames ; and that it would be an act of Christian forbearance to treat the poor relative a quarter as well as they treated the Dutch pug.

But when the morrow came, and I bowed my way into the room, about as much at my

ease as if clad in a suit of Milan steel, I no more dared broach the subject, than snatch a burning fuse from an ammunition wagon.

How *can* a man be at his ease, who feels ashamed of himself; and how can a man be otherwise than ashamed of himself, who is sneaking heiress-wise? I used sometimes to hesitate about looking even such a little humble patient thing as Mary in the face, after whispering to the majestic Marcia she was an angel. It was a capitulation of conscience; and

Conscience doth make cowards of us all.

It has been said of that moral indigestion, (arising from the gluttony of our first parents over the apple of good and evil,) that it resembles the stomach,—of whose existence we are unconscious, till something is amiss.—Something must have been sorely amiss after getting up a sigh for a gaunt heiress of thirty-four, for my conscience was as uneasy as if digesting a porcupine.

But what was to be done? It is very easy to *talk* of disinterestedness: but how is a younger brother, whose annual account at Delcroix's amounts to £120., and whose tailor's triennial bill defies the most remote surmise of payment, to dream of the domestic comforts of a well-ordered home, unless encumbered with a Marcia?—What but heiress-martyrdom became the portion of such fellows as Cecil Danby and Frank Walsingham, from the moment the family boroughs, their hereditary safeguard, were swallowed up in the parliament-quakes of schedules A. and B?—The provision created by the wisdom of our ancestors to secure the junior branches of the aristocracy from the evils of bill-paying and bill-drawing by the privilege of bringing in bills, had been wantonly annihilated by a few speculative philosophers, such as Danby and Mereworth,—as eldest sons, most incompetent judges of the exigencies of the case; and the consequence was that, Rigmarole being lost to Lord Ormington, I was forced

to lose myself, by an alliance with Tchindagore Park.—

Few men form a juster estimate than I of their personal consequence; for self-depreciation would be as great a piece of affectation on my part, as for the divinity of a temple eternally crowded with worshippers, to declare itself a false idol.—Through life, the first men of the day have sought my acquaintance,—the first women of the day, my smiles. Names are up for my friendship as for the Steaks; and it has never been denied that, to entitle a man to be seen on the arm of Cecil Danby, he must be, as for a fellowship at All-Souls, well-born, well-dressed, and tolerably accomplished. —My heart, like the widow's cruise, has been always full; and at the time of which I am writing, I am convinced that, had I been appointed Viceroy of Nova Zembla, half the best fellows in town would have applied to get upon my staff.—

Yet it was amazing how high those Crutchleys carried themselves towards me!—

The old lady, with her bird of Paradise turban and an aigrette of uncut sapphires which her late husband, Sir Marmaduke, had torn from that of Tippoo-Saib, surmounting a visage as grim as the Inquisition,—used to receive me as if she expected me to perform three salams before her Begumitish footstool.—As to Marcia, her influence over my self-possession was so tremendous, that when, after *trôner*-ing at White's as King of the Coxcombs, I came grovelling into her presence, I seemed like Garrick playing Abel Drugger in the afterpiece, after paralyzing the audience as King Richard.

And all because towards *them* I had placed myself in a pitiful position!—Other people were privileged to treat me like a puppy, they to treat me like a dog. I know not whether they *did* despise me, but I fancied they did, for I despised myself. And yet, though ashamed of myself, I dared not back out of the business.—I had incurred all the shame of an act of vileness; and by cutting short the connection, should only be said to have been

dismissed into the ragged regiment of Miss Crutchley's rejected suitors.

I persevered, therefore, though I own it was pain and grief to me whenever I noticed the dovelike eyes of little Mary fixed compassionately on my face, as much as to say, "*I* may perhaps escape from my fetters; but you, dear and unfortunate Cecil! are about to make yourself a victim for life!"—

She was a pretty little soul,—that Mary,—fair and colourless, like the flowers that grow in some shady place.—Her voice was feeble, her step timid, her eye moist, her hand tremulous.—She had evidently never had a day of happiness.—I know not whether she were clever,—I dare say she did not know herself,—for she had not been allowed leisure or liberty to think:—the poor relation having nothing in this world she could call her own,—not even an opinion.—The thing she probably liked best in the world was Mumpsey, the pug, as the only beast that did not snap at her.—Poor

Mary!—poor dear child!—It was melancholy enough to see so fair a rose alone upon a hedge of thorns!—

After all, one certainly cares less for women who are qualified to take their own part in the world.—Talleyrand was quite right when he decided to save the pretty feeble little woman, of the party who were to be *jété à l'eau*, and leave Madame de Staël to her fate, *parcequ' elle savait si bien nager*.—I cannot understand how a fellow is able to resist the timid look that appeals to him for aid and protection.—It is delightful to be able to confer happiness,—*very* generous people say that it is still more delightful to accept it. I suppose the obligations vouchsafed to *me* have been vouchsafed by those I did not love; at all events, I had not undergone six weeks of formal courtship in Bruton Street, without discovering that the gentle anxious glance hazarded towards me by Mary, from the table at which she was writing notes in the corner of the room, was worth ten

thousand patronizing smiles such as those with which her lofty kinswoman acknowledged my salutations.—

I have no doubt that Marcia was very much in love.—It was not likely she should be other wise. But "*tel vrai que soit l'amour, il s'y mêle toujours un peu d'alliage;*" and I am afrai it was no small triumph to her to enjoy the privilege of setting her foot upon the neck of the universal conqueror.

Women were not organized by nature for independence; and the mere exercise of authority hardens many a female heart, which, if kept in becoming subjection, would remain as soft and soothing as *pâte de guimauve*.—Marcia was not only rendered obdurate by a long course of free agency, but evidently contemplated the retention of her iron sceptre in the married state. She seemed resolved, since fated to purchase a husband, to buy a submissive one.—For the matrimonial chain, with its inevitable weight and solidity, must either be borne in

equal portions by the just division of affection; or hang heavier on one party than the other; and in an interested marriage each party naturally tries to fling the burden on the other. But I was luckily sufficiently wide awake to perceive the fate in store for me, and consequently precipitated nothing.—I have always been told that a long courtship is the most respectful, and I was consequently *very* respectful indeed.—"Ohne hast, ohne rast!" the device borne by the great Goethe on his seal ring, was my substitute for Ovid.

One morning, I was fairly driven out of the drawing room in Bruton Street by the tone in which my future mother-in-law, whom I regarded much as Henry IV. may have affectioned Catherine de Medicis, kept hectoring that poor trembling child about having neglected a cage of averdivats she had been ordered to cover over in Miss Crutchley's dressing room, the evening before;—and as I well remembered that Mary's looks and mine had been curiously dovetailed at the moment the command was

issued, I could not help fancying I might be the innocent cause of her forgetfulness.—

Did my Public ever happen to observe the soft spaniel-like expression of eye engendered by a life of early dependence?—Towards her protectresses, the looks of Mary were never uplifted; but when by chance she glanced towards some merciful stranger whose compassion seemed enlisted in her desolate fortunes, it was with the sweetness of those pale fragile looking flowers, insignificant and overlooked in the sunshine, which acquire from the dews of evening a grateful fragrance beyond all praise.—I dare say the poor girl was unconscious of the exquisite charm of her eyes; but I swear I have sat and watched one of those mild deprecating looks till they smote me with tenderness and remorse, as that of the "poor monk of the order of St. Francis" melted the susceptible heart of Lawrence Sterne;—that heart, by the way, which ought to have been entombed in some tranquil retreat, like Rousseau's in the isle of poplars at Ermenon-

ville,—instead of the crowded corner of a plebeian burying ground in the Edgeware Road.—It was bad enough to die in Bond Street!—*Is* Bond Street a place to die in?—excellent for selling bear's grease or publishing CECIL,—but to roll its carriages beside the death-bed of him who described the death-bed of Le Fevre!——

But I am wandering from Mary,—with whom, all things considered, it is far more agreeable to abide.—

I had quitted Bruton Street, as I was saying, in an exceeding bad humour; and my cab not being at the door, I set off to walk to the Travellers,—as was *not* my custom of an afternoon.—I hate walking. I hate the streets.—They always seem as much surprised as myself to find me in them;—and I accordingly sauntered through the Square and up Berkeley Street towards Piccadilly, in about as amiable a mood as its Black Bear or White might exhibit, if forced upon the pavement.—When lo! as I reached the overshadowing, though

alas! now stag-horned, elms of Devonshire House, a voice saluted me with "Halloo, Cecil!"—a salutation implying considerable audacity on the part of a voice unknown.

Scarcely three years my senior, yet old, cold, and withered, with chinchilla whiskers, and a coat manufactured—I suppose it knew where—but *I* could not possibly conjecture,—Lord Harris came wheezing after me!—I can only say that if my outward man retained as few visible tokens of the Cecil of Ch. Ch. as he of Jack Harris, I would as soon be lying in St. George's burying ground side by side with Lawrence Sterne!—

It is amazing the influence exercised by a total change of diet and climate on certain systems. At Carlton House and Windsor, Harris had been what Napoleon said he did not choose to be at Versailles, "*un animal à l'engrais, aux frais de la nation;*" pampered to the utmost, and Lucullusizing upon peacock's tongues, till every fibre of his frame was dis-

tended by plethora; and the sudden transition from this luxurious mode of living to the "tough and scorched mutton" of private life, had withered him as a December frost withers an Imperial plumb.—His skin was flaccid,—his muscles relaxed. Every limb and feature seemed still in deep mourning for the finest gentleman in Europe, whose *cuisine*

Ab ovo
Usque ad mala,

—that is from its *omelette aux huitres* to its *compôte d'ananas*,—was super-Apician.—

From Court, Harris had been driven into honourable exile as an Excellency—I forget where;—by the look of him, some petty German court, consisting of a palace, an opera house and two dozen hovels, whereof the eating and drinking, that is the drinking and starving, had converted him, from one of the fat kine of Pharaoh into one of the lean ones;—and it was curious to perceive how utterly the insolence of the man had evaporated with his inflation.—

It must be a vastly disagreeable thing to return to London after half a dozen years' absence, and find oneself fallen in public admiration, as from the top of the Monument to its base.—The hard, bold, dashing Jack Harris, to whom no man dared show his face unless its whiskers were properly groomed and appointed, —a supple-Jack kept by his betters to lay upon the shoulders of their inferiors,—the shrewd Sir John,—the man of orders and influence,— whose every breath was a trade wind, whose frown a frost,—to whom the Common Council wrote confidential notes and with whom ministers condescended to protocolize,—to whom Addresses to the throne were privately submitted and from whom re-dresses publicly implored,—the Mayor of the palace at Carlton House,—the Petronius of Roman punch,—the Walpole of the wardrobe,—the Chesterfield of pages in waiting,—*en un mot*, the mushroom to which the venerable oaks of the forest had bowed their diminished heads,—was now

merged in the million, a grain of sand in the human shoal, a speck of dirt in the grand muddification of human nature!——Oh! Agis, King of Sparta!—this world of ours hath been waltzing through the Lord knows how many dozen centuries and billions of miles, since the days when thou wert young; without being a jot the wiser for thy notable lesson!—

I was amused to see that Harris knew not exactly how to take me.—He was not even in so good a social position to be exactly cognizant of the standard of mine. We had both fluctuated. Our relative standing, as patronizer and patronizee, had varied fifty times since we uttered our first saucinesses to each other at Oxford;—and now that he was come from Mesopotamia or elsewhere, and, on entering his club, found himself receiving back with rigorous justice all the slights he had shewn to others while parading his peacock's plumes in his days of jayhood, he was no more able to determine whether the Danby of White's

stood higher or lower than the Cecil of Waiters's, than whether cock pheasants or hen were just then preferred for truffling by the commander-in-chief of the casseroles of the reigning King.

The royal cottage was pulled down as useless and an eyesore;—so was Jack Harris!—It is the fate with most such temporary buildings.—"*Ce riant Marly*" was made to laugh on the wrong side of its marble mouth on the death of Louis XIV., and follow its royal master to the dust; while Kew in the corner became on the affliction of George III. as much a parable as Solomon's vineyard.—Every sovereign has his hobby,—destined to become a broomstick again, and be appropriately flung into the dirt, when the magic breeze of favour which lifted it aloft, hath ceased to blow.—

I thought it right to be civil to the broomstick, in the shape of Lord Harris.—To cut a man in so vilely-cut a coat, is, in our situation of life, much the same as for a Thomson to turn his back on a Johnson, in a ragged one.—

Besides, there was no longer substance enough in him to bear cutting. Like Homer's gods and goddesses, he would have yielded to the slash, and reconsolidated anew into the same pretentious nothingness.

But what a bore for a man like me, at that moment rejuvenated by the breath of spring emanating from the sweet lips of my niece and little Mary, till I began to fancy that Time had made a pet of me and was forgetting to chalk my score among the rest,—to be cross-questioned concerning Votefilch, Falkirk, Mereworth, and every thing else most round-shouldered in London, as though they were our mutual contemporaries!—

"Do you remember, my dear Cecil," said Lord Harris, with excruciating familiarity, "how deucedly in love you were with that Lady Harriet Vandeleur?"—

"Lady *Whom?*"—said I, with an air of bland incomprehension.

"The pretty little Irish widow in Grosvenor

Place, to whom you used to read Strangford's Camoens, and swear she had an eye of tender blue!"

To imply my utter obliviousness, I slightly elevated my shoulders. Impossible to confide to the brute that the pretty little Camoens-reading widow, was now the disputatious snarling old woman of Exeter Hall—(from force of habit I was very near writing it cathedral!)

"And poor Lady Votefilch,—(do you recollect Lady Votefilch?)—who used to have her sitting-gowns and her standing-gowns, and whom I and Mereworth,—(Chippenham then!) used to take such delight in tormenting to take a seat at one of her own soirées, when she was laced up for the dignity line of action."

"Lady Votefilch was a friend of the late Lady Ormington, though much her senior,"—said I, coldly.—

"And that charming Marchioness of Devereux, who used to snub you so abominably!—

What has she been doing with herself these hundred years?—One never hears of her now!"

"One never hears of Sir Arthur Wellesley, *now*," said I. "The Duchess of Ilfracomb flatters herself she has eclipsed Lady Devereux."

"Oh, ay!—I forgot,"—said Harris,—evidently knowing nothing about the matter; for he had been living not only at the bottom of the basket, but so completely under it, that one must have been forced to shove it aside to find an insect so inconsiderable.

"But to be sure how every thing *is* changed in London!"—resumed he, after insulting me by a few more questions, tending to accuse me of my grand climacteric, without conscience or remorse.—"How grievously the Court *has* fallen off!—What a deficiency of refinement—what an extinction of all taste!—I foresaw it all, my dear Sir—I foresaw it—I prophesied it to the poor dear King!—Reform was sure to be to London, what the revolution of eighty-nine was to Paris;—Versailles devastated,—

the cottage, gone,—the aristocracy humiliated,—the lowest people hopping their way, like the frogs of the Plague of Egypt, into the King's chambers!—Dreadful to think of, Cis, dreadful to think of;—every thing profaned,—every thing vulgarized. Who would sit in such a House, I should like to know?—a House of highways and hedges.—I prophesied it all to the poor dear King!—Thank GOD *he* did not live to see this day!"

"Had His Majesty survived, the day would probably have exhibited other lights!"—said I, gravely,—well aware that it was the officious prophesying of Jack Harris which had transferred him out of Windsor Castle into an Irish Peerage. "However, it is best to let by-gones be by-gones."—

"By-gones, indeed!—But, my dear fellow, how amazingly well you are looking!—" cried his Lordship, suddenly interrupting himself. "When following you just now, Cis, I was almost in doubt whether it could be you—for

saying a little stiffness in the pins (there is gout in your family I think?) I swear I should have taken you for a man of five and thirty!—On looking into your face, of course one sees those tell-truth lines, in which Father Time inscribes *his* secrets and lets out one's own;—but on the whole, you wear like water-proof!"

It was unnecessary to inform his Lordship how much his five years' exile had been in my favour; and that as to my *wearing*,—half an hour per diem of *his* conversation would very soon wear and tear me out.—I was amused, however, to perceive his perplexity between wanting to persuade me he was still at the top of the tree, and dreading by his vaunts to lose my aid in raising himself from the bottom.

Harris evidently flattered himself I had forgotten his having been thrown overboard long previous to the wreck of the gallant vessel; and expected to find the late King's set not only still compact and coherent, but ready to

admit him into its body corporate of Fashion. —Bless the blockhead!—no two of us held together six months after the death of the King!—It is one of the advantages of worldly associations that, if lightly formed, they are dispersed with the same facility;—like the vessel prepared by Nero to founder with his mother, the spars are nailed together as if for the purpose of instability. Fellows who are what is called "deuced good friends" at a table spread daily for their enjoyment with the best viands and the best wines, the moment the table is wanting, find each other the greatest bores in creation; and of the set which Harris expected to find in mystic combination, like a Masonic Lodge, some were buried alive,—some dead,—some having married,—some been born again unto righteousness;—some were gone to the dogs,—some to the tabbies,—some were in the House of Lords,—some in the House of Words. —But you might as well have looked for the

last year's snow, as attempted to collect a knot of them in friendly recognition.

It was all as it should be. Courts are like corn-fields;—one crop succeeds another, and when the sickle hath done its work, it is absurd to go prosing on about last year's harvest.—The business of man is to look forward. All prattle of the past is good only as "alms for oblivion," to be dropped into the wallet of Time;—which last sentence looks so plausible and copy-bookish, that no doubt some hole-picker of a critic, will think it his duty to certify that it is a crib from Troilus and Cressida.—

After all his other affronts, Lord Harris ended by inviting me to dinner;—as a hint, of course, that I ought to invite *him*. But after listening to his exclamations about the delight of drinking a glass of wine again with so old a friend, a manner of phrase I particularly abhor, inasmuch as I take wine with nobody,

and do not wish to pass for any body's old friend, I simply replied, that I had engagements for three or four weeks.—And so we parted.

My readers may treat this interview as a trifle. I wish it may be any of their fortunes when between forty and forty-five they have been foolish enough to beflutter their spirits and senses with notions of second boyhood, by gazing day after day, for weeks, into the eyes of a pretty little creature of seventeen, to be suddenly reduced to sobriety by the spectacle of a contemporary, who, having thought proper to vulgarize into a middle-aged man, tries to persuade *you*, that you are as disgusting and antediluvian as himself.—

Moreover, as I knew that all the notice likely to be conceded to Lord Harris in fashionable life, would be as a contemporary and colleague of Cecil Danby, with the precept of

Percunctatorem fugito, nam garrulus idem est,

before my eyes, I dreaded his chatterings at Arthur's or the Alfred, about his "FRIEND CECIL and the pretty little Irish widow *five-and-twenty years ago!*"—

Oh! Jupiter! king of gods and men!—

Five-and-twenty years ago!

CHAPTER VIII.

Je n'ai pas rencontré une femme passionnée qui ne fût ou ne devint très malheureuse.—BODIN.

Her roving eye a wayward lustre shed,
But lofty thought sat thron'd upon her head;
Calm as a seraph, sportive as a child,
She trod the rocky beach, or heathy wild.
LORD MORPETH.

I REMEMBER, in my days of Carltonian householdry, contemplating with compassion the efforts made by one to whom all other efforts were easy, to convert an old beau into a young dandy. At the time, I fancied the cause mere vanity, and the effect, vexation of spirit. It would have been so much more manly, I thought, to wear his age with decency!

Alas! how circumscriptly does one appreciate the motives of one's fellow-creatures!—

That which appears a vain and frivolous pretence, sometimes contains the germ of an exquisite romance, or the epitome of ten volumes of Petrarchian sonnets. I was now beginning to understand the emotions compressed within the heart of the Regent, when trying to restrain his portliness within decent compass: and though *I* wanted courage to conceal *my* iron-grey under a Truefitt, I never agonized my feet in a new pair of varnished pumps, without recalling to mind the gait of His Majesty while trying to do it easy under the same Spanish-Armadian process of torture.

And was it *mere* vanity that now induced me to hobble in his royal steps?—Oh! no, no, no, no, no!—It was the very essence of chivalric devotion!—Conscious that although my brows were frosted with the tints of December, my heart was warm and balmy as April, I attempted with earnest labour to assign to my outward man, truer tokens of the inward Cecil, who had not, I swear it by the goddess and god-

ling of Paphos! *half* attained to years of discretion. It was useless to deceive the simple child who fixed her eyes so wistfully upon me, day after day, as if entrusting her destiny to the care of a protector, by allowing her to suppose me the middle-aged man I was beginning to appear. It was better she should know the worst;—it was better she should see in me the *un*trustworthy fellow I really was.—If she chose to confide in me, on discovering that though four-and-forty in age, I was four-and-twenty in feelings or reality, so much the better for *me*,—so much the worse for *her*. It was at least an act of conscientiousness to assign limits to my evil influence.

It was now the occupation of my mornings to look forward to my afternoon visits to Bruton Street;—not as regarded the heiress,—I am sadly afraid I had almost forgotten that the virtuous Marcia inhabited the house,—but as regarded the tremor I knew to be produced in the frame of that little gentle timid

creature, by the well-known knock of my tiger. —It was the music of her sphere.—All the joy, all the poetry of Mary's day were doubtless concentrated in the momentary glance of kindly sympathy I directed towards her, on entering the room.— My coming was the signal of her release from her labours and banishment to her own room; but the thirty seconds she *was* permitted to spend in my presence, were

> As if Favonius, father of the Spring,
> Who in the verdant meads doth reign sole king,
> Had rous'd him up, and shook his feathers, wet
> With Heaven's own dew of joy!

Strange as it may seem, in spite of the seven-and-twenty years intervening between us,—(for Mary must have beheld the light of day about the time when I was watching it through the cachemere curtains of the misunderstood beauty in the Rue du Montblanc,)—we were almost on a par in age. Mary had abided on the shady,—I, on the sunny side of the way of life. Joy is the real elixir of immortality; the charm

that imparts firmness to the muscle, elasticity to the flesh.—I, whose soul had been taking its ease, and whose body eating, drinking, and sleeping to its heart's content, all those forty years and four, retained a sort of spurious youth, like autumnal currants preserved under bass; while Mary, on whom the breath of adversity had early exercised its bitter influence, was saddened into precocious maturity, like the fruit whose sweetness is derived from an insect gnawing at the core.—Of the two, I am persuaded I was three or four years the younger.

People who saw me come out of the house in Bruton Street, my countenance brightened by the lustre of those emotions which impart bloom to the cheeks and expression to the eyes beyond the spell of all the cosmeticians of the day, used to say,—"'Pon my soul!—Cecil is the most extraordinary fellow upon earth,—there is nothing like Cecil!—With a grown-up niece at Almacks, he not only ma-

nages to look as well as when he left Oxford, but contrives to throw as much passion into his courtship of the ugliest heiress of these or any other times, as if sighing at the feet of the prettiest creature in the world. How does the fellow manage to *s'enthousiasmer à volonté?*—*We* failed with Miss Crutchley, because she saw that, instead of making love to her, we were offering it to her bought ready made. She refused Sir Moulton Drewe as being too old,—yet he is a year the junior of Cecil;—she refused Lord George Hartingfield as a fortune-hunter,—yet *his* income is twice as large as that of Cecil; and she refused Rotherhithe because she saw that he did not care a button about her;—while Cecil Danby, you see, continues to make himself appear as much in love as Garrick in Romeo!—Cecil is positively unique!"—

Unique or *inique*, it did not much signify! I had firmly made up my mind that, to be Hectored by an Andromache being insupport-

able, I would withdraw my motion for the hand of the heiress, the first moment she should be looking the other way, so as to afford me courage.—The sequel of the romance had still to be decided on.—I suppose there *was* some vague sequel glimmering in my mind;—for whereas my income, consisting of my pension, and the interest of ten thousand pounds, had been peremptorily made up by my brother to a thousand a year, I kept very foolishly reminding myself (more times a day than it is good to remind oneself of any thing but that Life is a brief pageant,)—that, with one thousand per annum and the woman of one's heart, Sicily or Italy, or even France, supplies nooks and corners of Tempe-an beauty and tranquillity, where people never enquire whether one's Mary's name was Smith or Thompson,—where peerages never unfold their hateful leaves,—and where, when for a happy pair

> There come those full confidings of the past,
> All sunshine now where all was overcast;

Their steps may wander till the day is gone,
Lost in each other;—and, when night draws on
Covering them round, amid the dying day,
All that is mortal seems to melt away!—

What fools we all are!—Well! I suppose there is no help for it!—Let us talk of something else!—

All this time, I was become sinfully blind to what was going on in Connaught Place.—I sometimes enquired of Frank Walsingham how Rotherhithe prospered in his suit;—satisfied that so buckramitish a suitor could not have proceeded further than the fifth volume of his Grandisonian courtship.—But Frank appeared just then so eagerly assiduous in the train of the Irish beauty Lady Mitchelston, the belle of the season, as to be utterly ignorant or utterly indifferent on the subject.—It is not every wretch of a younger son who would have evinced the same sangfroid concerning the lawful marriage of the head of the family.—

Meanwhile, I never went to Connaught Place or caught sight of my niece among the

glimpses of fashionable parties, without being struck by the nobleness of her air, and sensibility of her countenance.—That shyness which intercourse with the world usually wears off, seemed in *her* case only to increase.—There was always the same struggle of shame, when the curtain of the sanctuary of her mind was ever so slightly uplifted by the cross-questioning of idle talkers. Intelligence streamed from her eyes; yet whenever she *could*, she refrained from adding more than monosyllables to the conversation of her father.—

It was impossible to see a greater contrast than between the poor gentle child in Bruton Street, and the highly-gifted, highly-educated, highly-born, highly-fortuned, only daughter of the proudest and happiest of fathers.—It was as moonlight on the snow, compared with sunshine on some glittering lake.—So deceptious are outward shows, more especially as regarding female nature, that it was by no means improbable the still water ran the

deepest; and that there was more real sensibility in the soul of the humble Mary, than of the brilliant Jane;—of which no greater proof need be adduced than that Mary had cast herself out of her element to distinguish Cecil Danby, while Jenny submitted to be the idol of a Lord Rotherhithe, because he was what is called a suitable match.—

There was one thing to be taken into the account, which few men are at the trouble of including, when striking the balance of their conquests.—The existence of Mary was devoid of all light and colour; and as the deep and tranquil well reflects on its quiet breast, at noonday, the unseen star above of which the stream rippling in the sunshine fails to catch the light, *she* bore upon her gentle bosom the image which on a more worldly charmer had produced less impression.

I confess that in my sparkling days of Helenas and Emilys, I sometimes wondered how any girl could be egotist enough to imagine

her influence sufficiently potent to outbalance the millions of fascinations awaiting the favourites of society.—As I entered the crowded opera, for instance, singled out by a hundred eyes, amid the voluptuous swell of music, the blaze of light, the effusion of perfumes, the glitter of jewels, the confluence of gentle smiles, the pressure of partial hands,—how *was* I to be constant?—I did my best.—But it strikes me that it was much easier to love Cecil Danby from Southampton Buildings, than for Cecil Danby to be faithful to "any mortal mixture of earth's mould," as the centre of such an agglomeration of bright and happy influences.

Talking of bright and happy influences, I often dined, *en famille*, with the Mereworths. I was generous enough to forgive them the stupid mistake into which I had deluded myself; and resume, as a friend, the place which had never been conceded to me in any other capacity.—I went the oftener, that I saw them sadly dispirited by the manner in which Jane's

refusal of poor Chippenham was operating upon his character.—The boy was desperate—reckless,—rushing into dissipations of every kind; and poor Lady Mereworth, who seemed to entertain an idea that Cecil was a centre around which all the roúes of St. James's Street revolved, tacitly appealed to my protection in favour of her son, as the Pagans used to burn propitiatory sacrifices on the altars of the infernal gods.—She put him under my wing, as it were, at Crockford's; and implored me (tacitly) not to allow the angels or vampires of Laporte's eighth Heaven to fan him to death with theirs.—Neither she nor her husband seemed to understand that the boy was broken-hearted; that the only way to restore him to the decencies of life, was to heal with tenderest care the wounds of his afflicted soul. I was truly sorry for Mereworth and his wife. To have reared such a son, and for such a result, was indeed afflicting. Nay, I was more angry with Jane for her rejection of poor

Chippenham, than even for her civilities to Rotherhithe.

One night, as I was driving leisurely home from Connaught Place down Park Lane, I saw Chippenham with a cigar in his mouth, standing between George Hartingfield, and Mitchelston the husband of the Irish beauty, lounging near Dorchester House, till it was time to go to Crockford's; and persuaded Chip, to let me drive him to St. James's Street, by way of gaining some little insight into his habits and proceedings.

"How *can* you stand the company of such a fellow as Hartingfield, my dear Chip?"—said I—"A fellow who can do nothing but laugh, and has nothing to show for his laugh, but a remarkably bad set of teeth."

"I like to hear people merry!"—said the boy, peevishly.—"It is relief to live with a fellow who takes the trouble of laughing at his own jokes out of one's hands."—

"You are not of a time of life to be spared

the trouble of laughing, my dear fellow!" said I.—"Gravity, at your age, is as much out of place as a full-bottomed wig on the little boys in Kneller's family pictures. No man is ever popular, who will not lend his hand to the plaudits of the great audience of the world."

I could feel, as he leant beside me in the cab, an impetuous shrug of the shoulders.

"Let the people in the dress boxes clap the piece!" cried he. "I shall take my place in the pit.—I don't want to be popular.—I hate popular men!—"

"It is true that to be liked by every body is the way to be loved by no one," said I, carelessly,—really carelessly,—I had no ulterior meaning.—

"How can you say *that?*"—cried Chippenham,—and I was ass enough to imagine that he applied the injurious dictum to myself; as if a boy of one and twenty were likely to concern himself *who* cared or did not care for

a contemporary of his father!—"Look at Walsingham!"—

"Which of the Walsinghams?"—said I,—for *my* Walsingham was as commonly called Frank,—as I, Cecil.

"*Which?*—There is but one, I fancy, whom people trouble their heads about."—

"Frank is, I admit, a universal favourite," said I,—"but if you mean that Lady Mitchelston is attached to him, I am pretty sure she encourages him only as she encourages twenty other danglers."

"If she encouraged all London and half Dublin, it would be no manner of consequence to me!"—said Chippenham peevishly. "As to her flirting with Frank Walsingham, it only increases my disgust towards him, that any man favoured as *he* is, should condescend to enlist in the train of a married woman."—

I was glad to hear my young friend so morally disposed;—for, sooth to say, the edition of Holy Writ, for the accidental omission

wherein of the word "NOT" in the Commandment most important to the neighbourhood of Grosvenor Square, Archbishop Laud inflicted a heavy fine on the King's printer, appeared to have found its way that season into the bosom of a vast number of families!—Nevertheless, I could not forbear inquiring in *what* my friend Frank was so much more favoured than the rest of his sex.

"Had you been in the crush room last night, there would have been no need to ask the question," said he.

And he spoke so mysteriously, that I almost regretted Lady Crutchley's majestic habit of sailing out of the Opera ten minutes before the conclusion of the ballet, lest peradventure her feathers (including the bird of Paradise) should be ruffled by contact with those of inferior birds.

"As I was *not*,—perhaps you will explain to me Frank's *bonne fortune?*"—said I.—

"It was scarcely what you comprehend in

the word *bonne fortune*," resumed Chippenham; "though a fortune which I would resign all I am ever likely to possess in the world to accomplish!"

Somewhat anxious to ascertain who was to be the successor of my pretty niece in his affections, I persisted in my inquiries; till, by earnest cross-examination, I discovered that this violent fit of jealousy was simply occasioned by Jane having taken the arm of Frank Walsingham to follow Herries and his wife to the carriage!—

"You were not aware, I see, that Rotherhithe went down with his father yesterday to the Installation," said I. "No doubt he commissioned Frank to be his proxy in his absence."—

"*He* commission?" ejaculated Chippenham. "What upon earth signifies what Lord Rotherhithe says, does, or thinks,—either in that, or any other quarter?—You cannot really mean, that you ever for a moment supposed him an

object of interest to Miss Danby, otherwise than the brother of the man on whom she has so rashly bestowed her affections?"

"What do *you* really mean, my dear Chippenham?"—cried I, startled almost out of breath, in my turn. "Jane attached to Frank Walsingham? Frank Walsingham paying attention to Jane?—You are out of your senses!"—

"*I am!*" replied he, with much emotion,—"but it is the result, not the cause, of my making the discovery! — I swear to you, Danby, that had she attached herself to a man worthy of her or whom I believe capable of securing her happiness, I should have resigned myself to my disappointment. But to see her throw herself away,—to see her profane her young affections, by devoting them to one so utterly incapable of appreciating the value of such a treasure,—one who—but why talk upon it!"—cried he, in broken gasps, almost amounting to sobs,—"unless you wish to see me go mad in right earnest!"—

"Frank Walsingham!"—was all I could ejaculate;—nor did I refrain from the ejaculation,—for much as I commiserated the state of poor Chippenham, the idea of what my brother would suffer from such a discovery was infinitely more distressing. I remembered, however, the unreasonableness of all jealous minds. Even I, so *sure* of my influence under similar circumstances, had on more than one occasion, taken the most preposterous suspicions into my head!—

"You *must be* mistaken, my dear Chippenham!" said I; "Frank is paying attention to Lady Mitchelston!"

"A blind,—a mere blind!"

"But to deceive *whom?*"—

"Every body,—*you*,—who have been the first to be deceived!"

"But why deceive me?—even if he were in love with my niece, what signifies?—So is his brother,—so is old Sir Gerald Moseley,—so is Lord de Greyvin,—so are twenty others, to whom she gives not a moment's thought."

"While to Walsingham, she gives every thought of her soul!"

"How little, my dear Chippenham, how *very* little do you understand Jane!" said I. "That girl is enlightenment and intelligence personified,—and Frank a fellow who never opens a book!"—

"The more reason that she should like him! She knows enough for both.—She is tired of knowing.—She has lived all her life with intelligent enlightened people.—A man who *feels*, instead of *thinking*, is to her a novelty.—In point of companionship, who would ever equal her own father?—You once complimented me on my attainments. To *her* they must ever appear second rate; whereas the cheerful pleasant humour of Walsingham, which never comes into competition with the tone of Mr. Danby's conversation, delights as much as it surprises. I swear to you, that I would sacrifice all I know, and all I *have*, in exchange for that unique charm of Walsing-

ham's manner, of which I can understand the attraction, though I cannot understand the secret."

I could not utter a word in reply.—Instead of getting out at Crockford's with Chippenham, as I had promised, I pretended to remember an engagement, and hurried away. I drove off towards Belgrave Square. It was a beautiful summer's night; and I felt that I could not go home,—that I should be unable to breathe elsewhere than in the open air.

My brother!—what a disappointment—what a blow was in store for him!—The dissolute habits of Frank,—his want of enlightenment,—his want of fortune,—his want of position,—his want of consistency to attain one,—rendered him as unworthy a son-in-law for Danby, as perhaps could have been chosen by the caprices of fortune. And *I* was the cause of this!—I who had deprived him of his son, was about to deprive him of his daughter.—Lord Ormington was right!—Danby would repent

having made me his inmate, the longest day he had to live!

But might not Chippenham be mistaken.—Might not my advice be still efficacious with Jane?—No one could yet have represented to her the madness of her preference; for those entitled to lecture her on the subject, entertained no suspicion of her folly.—I resolved to take an early opportunity of deciding for myself whether Chippenham's suspicions were well-founded.—The countenance of my niece was so sure an indication of her feelings, that now my attention was directed to the subject, I could not long remain in doubt. But for my pre-engrossment in Bruton Street, I should probably have been beforehand with Chippenham in his discoveries.—

Had I been her father instead of her uncle Cecil, I should probably, according to the rule of contraries I have laid down as peculiar to the parental estate, have rushed into her presence, roughly interrogated her concerning

her predilections, and bad her speak no more to Frank Walsingham, on pain of disinheritance,—the usual threat held out on such occasions, by fathers to children, because the penalty of which children are least capable of comprehending the importance.—

But Frank Walsingham!—If Chippenham's surmise were just, what had Frank Walsingham been about?—How had he been dealing with his friend Cecil?—Though a dozen years younger than myself, I had ever admitted him to such terms of familiarity as entitled him to acquaint me with all his follies,—and Heaven knows he was not sparing in his use of the privilege!—I knew of his debts, his embarrassments, his entanglements.—He had made no secret to me of Lady Mitchelston's fancy for *him*—why conceal his own affection for Jane, unless for the nefarious purpose of so engaging her love in return, that one of the best matches in London might eventually fall to his share?—

But no!—I would not and could not believe this of Frank Walsingham!—There was nothing designing in his nature.—His heart was as guileless as Jane Danby's countenance. If he had erred, it was at the instigation of irresistible passion;—if he had deceived me, it was because he still hoped to subdue a feeling he understood the unlawfulness of encouraging.—However, I would see and judge for myself.—

I was driving, as I said before, in the Belgrave Square quarter,—simply for the sake of air, and a free causeway;—when, as I passed through Eaton Square, I perceived Sir Lucius Brettingham's house lighted up, and recalled to mind that, though regularly invited to her ladyship's Sunday evening parties, I had not set foot in her house throughout the season.—I was just in the irritable mood to go any where, or do any thing, to get rid of myself;—as a man, beginning to get tipsy, is ready to drink any thing and every thing presented to him.—I went in, therefore, to Lady Brettingham's;—I did not much care *where* I went.—

Mariana received me with all her former graciousness. It was part of her system to make no enemies in life; and the regiment of partizans recruited by all that usually creates a legion of indignant faces, was really surprising.—Her life was a system of policy.—Instigated by heartless ambition, she had resolved to render every thing, even the holiest of feelings and engagements, subsidiary to her rise in life;—and as in the political turmoil of France, even the altar-plate of the churches was melted down to assist in the advancement of the cause, nothing so sacred that Lady Brettingham did not trample under foot, as steps whereby to ascend the throne of preferment!—

Like every other course unflinchingly persisted in, it succeeded.—I remember the time when the Windsor set used to say to me, "Cecil—how *can* you lose your time with that vulgar woman;—pretty certainly—but after all —a Mrs. Brettingham?" — accompanied by shrugs and sneers, which, from certain persons, amount to a *peine infamante.*

Yet now, when I entered her rooms after six months' absence, so as to have acquired the freshness of eye indispensable to judge of such a point, *whom* did I find there—WHOM?—The very men, grown greyer and greater,—who, eight years before, had reprehended me for losing my time with "a" Mrs. Brettingham!—

She had managed to assemble round her every thing in London best worth assembling: every thing belonging to the old Court whose privileges of birth and fortune stood above the chance of a reverse of fashion such as that of Harris;—every thing belonging to the new, secured by a trifling alloy from the rigidity distinguishing its less popular adherents. All the ministers surrounded her,—and what was more to the purpose, the ministers' wives; for they knew that a card they had found so useful, might again acquire value from the chances of the game. The *beaux esprits* and *têtes fortes* of society came for the sake of sparkling in a ministerial circle; and the high *élite* of

mere fashion, simply because it was understood that there was some question of selection among even the thrice-winnowed chaff.

All this was easy to be understood: for people of good fortune, good manners, and good appearance, may do wonders, (by the exercise of extremely bad principles,) towards the formation of what is called a good set.—The wonder was that Mariana—I beg her and Sir Lucius's pardon, she had long been Lady Brettingham to *me*,—should have achieved it without becoming an object of odium and insult to the ejected, or being poignarded by the bosom friends of whom she had ceased to remember the existence.

Such is the charm of urbanity in this wicked world!—The Frenchman, who in a crowd elbows the breath out of your body, by first exclaiming "*Pardon!*" and conciliating you by a smile, deprives you of your title to knock him down;—"*car on peut tout faire*," says the old song, "*quand on le fait poliment.*" Objects

whereof the surface is carefully oiled, pass through the waters of strife, without contracting moisture; and Lady Brettingham shook the defiling waters from her wings—I was going to say like a swan—but I have a partiality for swans, and will not degrade them by the comparison,—shook the defiling waters from her wings, like a Muscovy duck.

As I half anticipated, Frank Walsingham was idling away his evening in Eaton Square; and already I felt the impossibility of accosting him with my usual friendship. If occupying his customary place beside Lady Mitchelston, I should feel it treachery to Jane;—if solitary and out of spirits, as becomes a lover absent from his love, I should feel it treachery to *me*. —I sat aloof, therefore, devoting to Lady Brettingham the formal attention and deference which constitutes every well-bred man's style of sending to Coventry the woman he has worn long enough on his sleeve; when up came Frank, with his usual sun-shiny face, and abrupt but cordial manner.

"Cecil?" cried he—"Cecil at a *soirée*, and on a Sunday evening!—My dear fellow, accept my congratulations!—I was afraid you were half married by this time!—Having missed you from your usual haunts, we fancied you crushed under the weight of parchments and wedding favours!—I have not seen you for centuries."—

"I saw *you* at the opera last night," said I, coolly.—

"And I saw *you*,—as one sees a lion at the Zoo.—caged in his den.—But you don't suppose I consider your sitting in Lady Crutchley's box, being at the opera?"—

"As much, I suppose, as *your* sitting in my sister's," said I, in the same tone.—

"*I* in Mrs. Herries's box?" retorted Frank.—"My dear Cecil, only prove your words!—It would have been indeed worth while to exchange the Omnibus for such an alternative.—Why, I no more dare show so much as the shadow of my glasses there, than in the Queen's!"

Lady Brettingham, little interested in our family discussion, now rising and walking away to play the agreeable to the French ambassador, Frank took her place beside me on the sofa.—

"Nay, I only thought so," said I, "because you took Jane to her carriage, as *I* ought to have done;—and——"

I snatched a glance at Frank, as I spoke, but saw no shame in his countenance. The villain only looked handsomer, brighter, and happier than usual.—"Upon his brow, shame was ashamed to sit."—

"Thank Heaven, then, you were otherwise employed," said he, candidly; "for unless when such chances stand my friend, I have no possibility now of approaching her.—Thanks to Ro., you know, I have long been banished the house; and as I do not dance, and have consequently no pretext for addressing her above a passing minute in a ball-room, I have not even those opportunities for contemplating her sweet

face, which even such a scoff of the earth as a detrimental like myself might enjoy, if he bore any other name than mine!"

There was no holding out against his frankness,—still less against his winning smiles.—He was Frank Walsingham again, and already I had almost forgotten poor Chippenham and his afflictions. I could not, however, forget my brother; and if not angrily, determined gravely to interrogate the delinquent.

"But my dear Frank," said I,—as uncleishly as my white cravat and miraculously fitting pantaloons admitted,—"what on earth can be the use of your indulging in admiration of Jane Danby, or of any other girl?—You are not a marrying man,—you are not in a position of life to ——"

"Ay!—tell me I am not in a position of life to enjoy the use of my eyes, ears, and understanding!" interrupted he, bitterly.—"Quite right, Cecil!—quite right!—I am a younger son,—eh?—Say it out, like the rest of them!—

a chartered beggar,—a wretch, by the condemnation of providence,—a child of wrath,—a victim by predestination."—

I looked quietly round, to ascertain, without allowing my suspicion to be manifest, whether he were mad or drunk; but saw nothing in his face, saving the frantic expression that my own used to wear when progressing every morning to Downing Street, during the period between my visit to the D'Acunhas' empty house in Burton Crescent and the mouth of the Tagus.—He was desperate only because desperately in love.—

"I know all you can urge," resumed he, perceiving my utter amazement. "I know that I have no more right to indulge in the pleasure of Jane's society, than to form pretensions to a crown!—But I cannot help it—Cecil,—I swear to you I cannot help it!—If I had the slightest reason to hope or fear that my attentions were noticed by her, and that they might consequently prove prejudicial to

her happiness, I would refrain;—hard as it might be,—I would never speak to her again! —But to have known such a creature as that,—to have seen her intimately as, when you lived in Connaught Place, I used to see her,—so superior in intelligence and accomplishments to every human being, yet simple and gentle as a child, — gay, fearless, loving, confiding——But God forgive me for talking about her!" cried he, interrupting himself,—"I never so much as think of her a moment, when I am alone, without feeling it to be profanation, and swearing it shall be for the last time!"—

"I rejoice to see you so reasonable on the subject, my dear Frank," said I;—"for if you seriously come to consider the question"—

But why inflict upon the Public the prosification I inflicted upon poor Walsingham?—The Public has no evil designs against my pretty niece, and deserves no such chastisement as a lecture at my hands!—For the last ten

pages, it has probably been exclaiming with Hesiod,

—— Των δ' ακαματος ρεει αυδη
Εκ στοματων ηδεια ———

and I will consequently put an end to a long chapter, requesting it to take breath for one shorter and, I trust, more sweet.

CHAPTER IX.

Her beauty was not made for all observance,
If beauty 't might be called. It was a sick
And melancholy loveliness, that pleased
But few; and somewhat of its charm perhaps
Grew from the spot she dwelt in.

PROCTOR.

Velut minuta magno
Deprensa navis in mari, vesaniente vento.

CATULL.

HONOUR and glory are as capricious in their influences as the infection of the cholera, which used to sweep off the patients on one side the ward of an hospital, and allow the other side to arise and walk.—The lion of St. James's Street is an ass in Gray's Inn Lane; and the John Duke of Marlborough, a demigod in Blenheim Park, becomes in France the "Marlbrook," *qui*

s'en vat-en guerre,
Mironton, mironton, mirontaine,

as a cadence for the dandling of teething infants !—

I, Cecil Danby, who to Frank was an angry uncle, protecting my pretty niece from the attacks of a younger brother, a middle-aged man not to be hoodwinked by a pair of silly lovers,—became in Bruton Street not only a designing younger brother myself, but by a most Janus-like extent of iniquity, as silly a lover as any Master Slender either on or off the stage !—

The French have a proverb of "*jeter son bonnet par dessus les moulins*," to exemplify any desperate piece of folly; and pleasant enough it is, in some cases, to fling one's hat over the mill.—But believe me, gentle Public, it is much pleasanter to throw one's wig !—When once a man of mature age makes up his mind to play the fool, or rather when his mind makes itself up to make a fool of *him*, the ex-

citement of dashing down the Montagnes Russes, as I once did with my *femme incomprise* at Tivoli, or of shooting the rapids, or winning a whole night long at hazard, is nothing to it!—

I might seem very grey and very grave to Frank Walsingham, when prosing to him on Lady Brettingham's yellow satin divan; but I will be hanged if I looked either grave or grey to Mary, when, by going an hour earlier than usual to Bruton Street, the following day, I not only found her alone, arranging fresh pens and paper on the writing table, but contrived to make a beautiful moss rose which had made its entrance into the room in my button hole, make its exit in her bosom.

It was a rash act;—for the possession of a rose was as hard a matter for Mary to account for to her tyrants, as that of the Pitt diamond. Roses do not rain down from heaven, and who was there to give one to a poor neglected thing like her? Who had ever in her life bestowed

so much as a flower upon that humbled child? —It could only be by an act of culpability that even so slight a token of human kindness had fallen to her share.—

Mary hurried out of the room after receiving it, — perhaps because alarmed lest I should offer more; and already so confused by the few words and momentary pressure of the hand accompanying the gift, that she was not aware of running against Miss Crutchley on the threshold. — Not a syllable passed between them,—as far as *I* could perceive, not even a glance.—But it is amazing what comprehensive powers exist in the augenblick of a jealous woman!

I would recommend any gentleman, whether black or grey, imprudent enough to bring clandestine roses to young ladies, not to let them be *moss* roses.—It could only be the fibrous stain left by the tell-tale flower on the lappel of my coat, that pointed out the origin of the treasure revealed by that rapid

glare of the Bengal tigress, as in Mary's possession.

Unaware, however, that her suspicions were astir, I could not imagine the cause of the suppressed ire I distinguished in her latent growl, and saw trembling in her claws.—The strict habits of the family induced me, indeed, to ascribe her indignation to the tittle-tattle of the Morning Post, lying on the table, which of course chronicled a name of so much importance as that of Cecil Danby, among the "HONOURABLES" present at Lady Brettingham's Sunday conversazione of the night before. I concluded she was shocked; and, hypocrite as I was, affected to explain the accidental nature of my visit.

Still, the virtuous Marcia kept looking fiercer and fiercer,—and growing taller and taller, — like the weird woman in Scott's charming ballad of Lord Ronald, till I began to entertain fears for the ceiling.—Every word I uttered, she managed to contradict;—every

opinion I advanced, she fractiously opposed.—It is amazing how invariably a woman intent upon recalling the wandering affections of a rover, contrives to make herself fifty times more disagreeable than usual.—So odious indeed and so bitter were both mother and daughter that day, that I felt the impossibility of supporting the bondage of such a marriage chain, even if a chain of diamonds of the first water; and should perhaps have been harassed and irritated into an explicit avowal to that effect on the spot, but that I was afraid they might visit upon little Mary the insult offered to themselves.—Good Lord! how one *does* hate an ugly woman to whom one has been guilty of the baseness of making interested love, when once the effort is over and repented!—

That night, the Crutchleys had a card party; —a thing out of date except in the dreadfully dowagerly set which constituted their real element, when they did not purchase the presence of the Lady Grindleshams and Duchesses of

Walmer, by that of Grisi, Rubini, Tamburini, Lablache, and Gunter.—I was already engaged to dine there, what is called *en famille*,—heaven pity me!—and on coming up from dinner, (stupidly early, but how could I remain in the dining-room tête a tête with the portrait of the late Sir Marmaduke, in full regimentals, with the insurance plate of Seringapatam dangling therefrom?)—I found Mary in her simple morning gown, receiving orders about the refreshment table from the heiress; who was arrayed in Tyrian purple, to which the yellowness of her skin appeared to add a golden fringe.—

Mary's eyes were, as usual, cast upon the carpet; and her lips simply moved in the affirmative when asked whether she understood the instructions she was to issue to Gunter's people. —I made it a general rule to look the other way, whenever Mary was being brow-beaten. —But on the present occasion, nature got the better of my vileness; and when I saw that the

poor girl's eyes rivalled in colour the rose I had so imprudently offered her, made my way straight into the back drawing-room, through which I knew she must pass, and on seeing her white muslin gown glide silently through the glare of that gorgeous chamber, advanced towards her, and reckless whether my movements were perceptible or not to her persecutors, whispered as she passed, — "Mary, dearest! be of good cheer.—You have friends who will not allow you to remain thus wretched. —Be comforted!"—

As she disappeared through the door on one side, like some fair setting star, Marcia rose on the other threatening and lurid as the planet Mars. I saw her standing between the open folding-doors, surveying us, and upon the point of exploding into a burst of fury; when, fortunately for all parties, the servants announced the Earl and Countess of something or other, and she was forced to turn round, curtsey and be civil. Other visitors followed in quick

succession, and it was diverting beyond measure to see her every now and then darting annihilating glances towards *me*,—then, turning with more than her usual amenity towards some dowager of sufficient stupidity and stateliness to require being twaddled to.—Poor soul!—I *really* pitied her! Think what it was to an ugly woman of four and thirty to be startled from her happy dream of being loved by CECIL!—

The species of hard, dry, guinea-point whist played by elderly Countesses and K.C.B.'s, was soon proceeding at half-a-dozen tables.—"I *do* believe," said Vanburgh's Sir John Brute, "that if I were married to a hogshead of claret, matrimony would make me hate it!" —*I* do believe that half-a-dozen such card parties, would make me loathe even whist;—that glorious and immortal game, of which a rubber with a satisfactory partner, and well-shaded lights, might reconcile one to existence in a cell of the Inquisition, on the eve of tor-

ture.—But a cell of the Inquisition were a trifle compared with the drawing-room in Bruton Street, which, that night, was literally too hot to hold me.—After swallowing half-a-dozen glasses of the iced cherry-water I knew to have been ordered by Mary, I slipped away;—and went home to sweeten my imagination by

> Sunny gleams of half-extinguish'd thought,
> And trembling recognitions dim and faint;
> The offspring of a sad perplexity.

For she had looked mildly and thankfully towards me, in reply to my passionate address! —Her eyes, those tranquil well-springs of hallowed feeling, had for once been uplifted towards me.—I saw I was beloved.—Dear gentle child!—What an *avenir* for my old age to be worshipped by so fair a creature. Ten thousand a year?—Bah!—what were thrice as much,—if shared with a Hecate whose countenance would put *me* out of countenance for the remainder of my days!—One thousand with

Mary were fairly worth ten thousand with Marcia!—I determined to make all this explicitly known to them on the morrow.—

" In my rash youth, when George the Third was king," I took the liberty of introducing my Public to my chamber in Hanover Square; —and making it familiar as its glove, with the relative position of my nail-nippers and boot-jack.—I hesitate about requesting the honour of its company to my coucher or lever in St. James's Place!—The bright, glazed, summery freshness of the old convolvulus-room, was, I fear, more strictly in accordance with its notions of the fitness of things for a *héros de roman*, than the snug apartment of which the well-listed doors and windows, the patent locks and hinges, the commodious wardrobes and sober four-post bed, now whispered that for Cecil the poetry of life was yielding precedence to its prose. I forget even the colour of the curtains of my present bed;—I only know that the mattrass was elastic, and the pillows of

down.—After all, what signifies the colour of one's curtains, providing the bed be comfortable?—

I allude to the extreme comfortableness of the said bed, dear Public, as some excuse for the sound sleep in which I was plunged at eleven o'clock the following morning, when a letter was brought in with my hot water, and laid on my dressing table. In the days of the convolvulus hangings, O'Brien would have known better than to lay a note in a female hand writing on my dressing table; and instinct would have woke me to find its dear deluding pages on my pillow!—

On the present occasion, there was no great fault to find with him!—How was any right-thinking valet to conjecture that those harsh authoritative-looking lines were traced by a woman's hand;—*he*, accustomed for twenty years to see his master addressed in all sorts and varieties of tender fluent running hands, which look as though Titania

herself had presided over the curly tails of their y's, and the aerial slightness of their hair strokes! Why the very name of CECIL was, (like Scotland under the tyranny of Macbeth,) "almost ashamed to know itself," when prefaced by a capital C, nearly the shape of a coal-heaver's hat!—

My readers, though they have not yet opened the letter, have of course already premised the name subscribed at the bottom of the last page. —And there were four of them!—four pages of reproaches in that crabbed, scrubby, repellent handwriting, worthy only to perpetuate a family prescription or laundress's bill.—And that it should be privileged to indite tendernesses to *me!*—

Well,—it was my own doing!—If Cecil had never abased himself to write to *her*, the heiress would as soon have ventured to address Her Majesty, as the King of the Coxcombs.

I could very easily favour the public with the letter, for I have it still.—I keep it as

people keep a packet of vitiver, or Russia leather, or any other harshly flavoured thing, to drive away the moths from their furred coats.—But it would be a very great bore to transcribe and nearly as great a one to peruse, four pages of the vituperations of an angry, jealous, purse-proud woman.—Her letter was of the same complexion as her face:—I shuddered as I read!—

One comfort, however, was contained in those rugged lines.—It was a declaration of war,—and would save me the trouble of opening the first fire.—Miss Crutchley condescended to call me ugly names,—and I accepted them.—Like Lovelace, when Clarissa addresses him as—"Villain!"—I replied, "Am I a villain, Madam,—*am* I a villain?"—and made good her words.—

It would, in fact, have been extremely awkward for a man of even my self-possession, to pay a morning visit for the express purpose of saying in the most plausible of English—

"I have been paying my addresses to you for the last two months, as the richest woman of my acquaintance,—and with the best intentions of making myself comfortable for life at your expense. But the bitter pill has stuck in my throat. *Agréez l'assurance des mes hommages les plus respectueux.*"

As to writing it, even Miss Crutchley's cross-grained penmanship could scarcely have made up its mind to convey such an affront to a woman.—It was difficult even to answer the note so as to accept her defiance without committing myself; and I determined to let expressive silence say all I felt ashamed to say for myself, *of* myself.—

In the course of my toilet, however, which was a somewhat more agitated one than became my years and experience, I recalled to mind that any offence I might commit against the heiress would be visited not on my own head, but on that of Mary. If, while I still frequented the house, they had presumed so to

molest the poor girl, that she had not dared uplift her voice or eyes, what might they not do after losing all hopes of me?—How, too, was I to convey to that suffering child the intimation of my sympathy?—I vow to the memory of Richardson and Fielding, I did not so much as know her name! Finery in the first instance, and consciousness in the last, had always prevented my asking it of the Crutchleys; and "To MARY," may look very interesting at the head of one of Burns's or Byron's poems, but would appear passing strange, and surpassing ridiculous, to the letter sorters of the two-penny post.—As to bribing servants,—I have heard fellows talk about bribing servants;—but how or where is it to be done?—Can one drive to a door in Bruton Street in one's cab, or even walk up to it in one's boots,—knock at the door,—and offer a five pound note to the butler, or sovereign to the footman?—I should expect to be given in charge to the police!—As to accosting Lady

Crutchley's butler (as square-toed and respectable a looking gentleman as an East India director) with any but the most moral views, I would as soon have presumed to dedicate these my memoirs to a Bishop!—

What was to be done?—My Mary—my poor gentle Mary!—*Her* position was utterly different from that of any other girl who had ever unfortunately fallen under my influence.—Emily Barnet was rich;—Helena Winstanley surrounded by the excess of care and comfort peculiar to the country-baronet class of the community;—Sophronia Vavasour of so high a cast a mind, as to be a sort of Edystone light-house, firm against the contending waves of destiny.—But Mary,—gentle, timid, friendless, poor,—Mary,—

> Gentle, as if a lily there
> Should shed its white leaves to the air;
> Pining for the summer sun,—
> *She* might die ere night were done!—

I was just making up my mind to go boldly

to the house and explain myself to Lady Crutchley,—for, after all, delicacy with Lady Crutchley would have been as much out of place as with the Secretary of the Mendicity Society,—when Lord Chippenham made his appearance. After sending to inquire whether, as I was still at my toilet, he might come up to my dressing room, instead of waiting for an answer, in he walked.—Cool enough, by the way!—I do *not* dye my hair.—I have no secrets of any very particular consequence;—but there *might* have been things lying about (such as, when a boy, I used to notice on the dressing-table of Sir Lionel Dashwood,) which I should not have cared to exhibit to a lad like him.

Poor Chipp!—However startled by the liberty he was taking, I could not forbear noticing with regret the change effected by the last year in his handsome person!—His eyes were now lustreless and surrounded by a livid circle,—his lips parched,—his hair neglected. All the

brightness of youth was gone; and in its stead, the haggardness and desperation that succeeds the orgie and the hazard table; like the rugged desolation covering after the eruption of the mountain above, the sunny slopes and smiling vineyards of Portici.—Despair had passed that way; and blossom and herbage were dried up and withered!

I was not long in ascertaining the motive of his visit.—Chipp was in a scrape.—Chipp had quarrelled at Crockford's the night before, or rather that morning at four o'clock, with Frank Walsingham;—and Frank had already sent Lord Mitchelston to him for an explanation.

"What on earth am I to do, my dear Danby?" cried Chippenham, throwing himself into a chair.—"I know myself to have been the aggressor;—yet I swear to you that I would sooner cut off my right arm than write a word of apology to the fellow."—

"But you need not write; if you know you are in the wrong, say so."—

"Never!—Nothing shall induce me to say or write a syllable of excuse or explanation to Frank Walsingham!—I sought the quarrel.—I would kill him if I could.—A duel may spare me the crime of murder or suicide."—

"Don't talk such cursed nonsense, Chipp!" said I.—"I never thought you a school-boy till this minute!"—

"That is what Hartingfield told me just now, when I went to ask *him* to be my friend in the business. He would have nothing to say to me!"—

"Then why do you come to *me?*" said I, somewhat nettled at finding myself second in his list of seconds.

"Because, as Miss Danby's uncle, you are bound to be indulgent towards a madness arising out of my love for her."—

"Madness, indeed!—But don't expect *me* to be your abettor.—So far from encouraging you to fight, I think, if you sought a frivolous pretext to quarrel with Frank, you cannot be

too earnest or too immediate in your apologies. —As to allowing the duel to proceed, I promise you that if you do not behave reasonably, your intentions shall be frustrated."

Chippenham muttered something about "cold-blooded" and "certain age," to which I was good natured enough to turn a deaf ear.—

"My dear Chippenham," said I, more gravely, "listen for once to a man who has your father's age, though not his authority. If there be a character more despised than another in modern times, it is a bully and a duellist.—The chances of life, in political or military life especially, *may* bring a man into contact with fellows too ill-conditioned to be amenable to any other code. But among well-bred people, Chipp, no *such* insults ought to pass as require *such* atonement. Between yourself and Walsingham, for instance,—you, the most gentlemanly lad, and Frank the warmest-hearted fellow in town, how *can* such

words or looks or gestures have occurred as to demand this ignominious mode of satisfaction?"—

I had better have held my tongue.—The epithet lad applied to himself while to Frank I conceded the title of a warm-hearted fellow, put the bad blood anew into circulation.—

"It is useless arguing on such questions," said he, snatching up his hat. "I thought there was more of Cecil Danby left in you!—It was not as my father's old friend, I appealed to your services."—

"Stay a minute, my dear Chippenham, stay a minute!"—said I, clutching at his sleeve, as I saw him rush out of the room.—But he was already gone!—He would not be re-called. All I could do was, standing in my dressing gown at the top of the stairs, to cry out, in French, lest the *valetaille* should hear and report,—"At least, consult some reasonable being. Go to De Greyvin—go to Colonel Hartland."—

I know not whether he heard me, for he was out of the house in a moment!——

Hæ nugæ seria ducent
In mala, derisum.

CHAPTER X.

O passi sparsi,—o pensier vaghi e pronti,—
O tenace memoria, o fero ardore,
O possente desire, o debil core!

PETRARCA.

Spes incerta futuri.—VIRG.

My affairs now exhibited what physicians, when they cannot cure a patient, call a complicated case.—My first object, however, on emerging from the breakfast table, to my honour as a friend be it spoken, was to hurry after Frank Walsingham. It struck me that, in the way of prevention, my influence might accomplish most with *him*.—

But Frank was not to be found.—The irregular habits of his life rendered him often difficult to be met with.—His own man swore

he had left town the preceding day.—I suppose he was not a hero (of veracity) to his valet de chambre.—

From Frank's, I proceeded to the house of Lord Mitchelston, who had brought the message to Chippenham. But Mitchelston, too, was out;—"the time of my lord's coming home, very uncertain."—

All this was the deuce of a bore; and sorely did I revile myself for not having laid hands upon the boy, when I had him in my power, instead of allowing him to escape so easily.—As he had himself muttered, there was beginning to be something of the "man of a certain age" in my proceedings.

I hastened to White's;—none of the party were there,—none of them had been. I went to Crockford's,—the Traveller's;—and right amazed were the waiters by the phenomenon of the star CECIL visible above the horizon, so many hours before its usual time of rising.—But all without effect.—Not one of them was

to be seen or heard of.—I never felt more uncomfortable in my life.—The face of Lady Mereworth, as I beheld it at the coronation, as I beheld it at the Chippenham festivities, irradiated by adoration of her first-born son, rose up in judgment before me;—and though no longer in love with it, I was penetrated with too much regard and respect for the best of wives and mothers, not to enter fully into her feelings in case of any further misfortune befalling that promising boy. She had placed him as it were under my protection. She had implored me to watch over his indiscretions.—Alas! she had not surmised the necessity of watching over his safety!—

For after all, it was my own selfishness which had allowed the lad to grow pettish and quit my house with such precipitation. But that my attention was pre-absorbed by the unquiet state of my affections, I should have seen at once the importance of detaining him.

And now, I might as well stand at Hunger-

ford Stairs, watching for the return of a straw which the morning's tide had wafted towards Richmond, as expect to find Chippenham again, amid the hurry of a crowded London day in June.

Never before had I been so nervously conscious of the turmoil gradually awakening at the West-end, between the stillness of mid-day and the flurry of the afternoon;—the progressive stir of carriages, and concussion of pedestrians;—the cabs and horses assembling at the clubs to bear away the flower of this enlightened metropolis from the perusal of newspapers, to the performance of those great parliamentary and dinnerary duties which are to supply pabulum for the newspapers they are to read the following day:—the frantic pace of chariots dashing from the important business of buying ribbons and laces, to the important business of displaying them in the Park!—When moving *with* the crowd, one sees nothing of all this; but when, in anxious suspense that

renders every moment critical, one becomes tortured by the noise of the crowd and almost insulted by their factitious and aimless activity, it is scarcely possible to abstain from raising one's hands to Heaven, or exclaiming—

Quid trepides in usum
Poscentis ævi pauca?—

Who is to be master of his own mind in the midst of all this hubbub?—People presume to sit in judgment on the actions of a London man, in the quietude of a country library whose philosophical tranquillity is disturbed only by a gnat buzzing in the window, and where the ticking of one's own Breguet becomes distinct of enunciation as the silver voice of Queen Victoria from her throne;—without taking into the account of his errors of omission and commission, the tumult of his existence,—the rumbling of drays,—the rattling of omnibuses,—the crying of mackerel,—the grinding of barrel organs,—the shrieking of

the "Light of other Days,"—the knocks, single, double, seven-fold, ten-fold, perpetually thundering in his ear,—the galloping of horses,—the braying, or rather talking, of asses—ἱππων μ' ὠκυπόδων ἀμφι κτύπος οὐατα βάλλει! How is a man to keep his judgment clear as Lyndhurst's, or his temper unruffled as Normanby's, amid such "damnable iteration?"—I do not consider my nerves much more excitable than other people's, even now that gout and colchicum have done their worst upon me; and at that time, unless after a hard day's whist succeeding a hard day's tennis, my hand was tolerably steady.—But I very well remember that, by seven o'clock on the day of Chippenham's duel, my left hand would have been sorely in request to assist my right in conveying a glass of wine to my lips.

The boy lived of course with his parents in Grosvenor Square; and it struck me, that my surest way of hearing news of any of the party, was to take up my quarters at Lord Mere-

worth's. The venerable porter was now reinstated in the hall,—(Giacomino, the Calabrian, having soon fretted himself into an atrophy in a country where maccaroni and poignards are tabooed, and been posted back to Naples,) and though old Peter assured me that my lord was down at the House, and my lady not yet returned from a breakfast at Percy's Cross, I had no difficulty in obtaining leave to wait for them in the drawing-room. The groom of the chambers obligingly forced the evening papers upon me, to beguile the time;—little suspecting what anxious thoughts rendered all foreign aid superfluous.

There was I, installed in the corner of that very sofa, which I had once trembled to approach, and which was now no more to me than one of the sofas at Crockey's, listening, mole-eared, to every unusual sound in the house or even in the street, which I fancied might announce a catastrophe. What would become of that doating father and mother if their son were brought home dead, or desperately wounded!

My mind was haunted by the eager looks with which Mereworth and his wife had watched the progress of Chippenham's devotion to Jane, at Ormington Hall, under the proud sanction of her father and grandfather; —their undisguised joy in the hope of his early settlement in life, and the perpetuation of their name in two beings so nobly endowed to do it honour.—Their subsequent mortification and recent vexation at his sudden change of habits and character could not obliterate from my mind the brightness of that first day of parental triumph! — Poor souls! — Poor Lady Theresa!—

Mereworth was the first to arrive.—He evinced no surprise at finding me established in his house, for of late we had been on friendlier terms than ever; and while still debating in my mind whether to hint the motive of my untimely visit, in came Lady Mereworth from her dejeuner, looking so fair, so serene, and so perfectly unconscious of care, that I had not

courage. She was more than usually elated. A royal personage had been complimenting her upon her son; and the silvery accents in which she recounted to her husband platitudes to which they both seemed to assign oraculur importance, might have given value to still poorer fragments of the King's English.

I had already invited myself to dine with them, *sans façon*, and despatched a note of apology to Connaught Place, where I knew I should be waited for, at a political dinner my brother was going to give that day: — and Mereworth was evidently much more amazed by such a derogation on the part of Cecil as my proposal to wash my hands in his dressing-room and dine in boots,—(dine in dusty *boots* with Lady Mereworth!) than by any other strangeness of my strange proceedings.

But scarcely did I find myself tête à tête with him in the said dressing-room, in the brotherly familiarity of clothes-horses, and sponges, than I could refrain no longer.—Tears

stood in my eyes as I burst into incoherent explanations of all the torture I had been suffering,—all he might have to suffer.—

I should be sorry to have my hand *often* grasped, as Mereworth did mine in the spasmodic agony of his soul:—Highland Cameron's hand-shaking being gentleness by comparison! —Some minutes elapsed before he could utter a syllable.—His first words were—"CECIL!—*his poor mother!*"—

We agreed between us that since, after-all, my apprehensions might be premature, nothing should be said at present to alarm her.—But a confidential servant was despatched to Walsingham House, to bring the earliest tidings of Frank; and another posted in the Square, to intimate privately to Lord Mereworth the arrival of any messenger likely to bring news of his son.—

Never shall I forget that dinner! We three sat down,—with Chippenham's place vacant, opposite to me;—two of us in a state of uneasi-

ness, difficult to describe; and poor Lady Mereworth, poor Theresa, gentle and smiling as usual, talking of her son every now and then in a confiding happy tone that brought tears into our eyes.—I saw Mereworth grow paler and paler, as the moments passed slowly on. —The dinner was interminable.—I, usually so indulgent on such occasions, cursed in my soul the pertinacity of the French cook, who kept us waiting two minutes for the *fondu*, that it might be wafted before us as becomes a *fondu*, light and scorching as a lover's sigh;—and after all, it was spoiled by a *petit point de Parmesan* too much!—

We sat it out, however, heroically;—and if I wanted to record a miracle of manly courage, would enlarge upon the assumed cheerfulness with which poor Mereworth, with his brow moistened by cold dews of agony, indulged the prattle of his wife.—Every now and then, I could see his eye transfix, as some murmur in the distance met his ear; for the

Square was now as quiet as becomes all aristocratic neighbourhoods at feeding time, from eight till ten ;—and we were pretty sure of hearing in the dining-room what might chance in the hall. Whatever the extent of the evil, interference or prevention was now impossible. All the poor father had to do was to exercise his fortitude ; and he fulfilled the duty in a manner that made me blush for my former misappreciation of his philosophy.—

At length, the rattle of a hack-cab, suddenly ceasing a door or two distant from the house, caused the blood to mount into the pale face of Mereworth, and our eyes to meet with significant anxiety.

" Won't you order coffee for us, Theresa ?" said he, in a hoarse voice to his wife,—to whom he had probably never before in his life afforded a hint to leave the dining-room.—" Cecil wants to get off early to the opera."

Lady Mereworth instantly rose from table; and I stood holding open the dining-room door

for her, to make sure that she passed the vestibule and staircase, before any communication took place with the hall.

"Thank heaven!" I inwardly murmured, when she was out of sight;—and at that moment, the hand of Mereworth who had approached me in the interval, pressed heavily on my shoulder. On turning round, I saw him ghastly as death, and scarcely able to support himself, awaiting the opening of that red baize door, which was to convey his sentence of life or death.

For we had already heard a hurried ring at the bell, in connection with the stopping of the cab; and the servants in the outer hall were only waiting the departure of the Countess, to announce the result.—Poor, poor Mereworth!—Who would be a father to go through such an ordeal?—Thank heaven I am still a bachelor! Give me the Pyrrhonic beatitudes of ataraxis,—the *pococurante* tranquillity of a luxurious indifference,—before all the family sensibilities in the world!

Blessed be the gods, it was Chippenham himself who at length made his appearance at that open door;—dishevelled, haggard, and evidently intent upon a furtive entrance into the house. Almost before he had discovered his father and myself on the threshold, Mereworth had dragged him in by the sleeve into the dining-room, and closed the door upon him. He did not upbraid him,—he did not question him,—he did not so much as inquire whether he were a murderer.—*He was alive*, and that was enough!—Clasping the young man to his breast, he called him his child—*not* his son,—his "dear, dear child!"—kissing his cheeks as he had probably never done before since his days of childhood.—And the tears poured down his own as he did it!—

I was inexpressibly affected.—The death of Nelson was always rendered more grievous to me by the touch of nature conveyed in the kiss demanded by the dying hero of Hardy,—the human tenderness of a great mind,—than

by all the clamour of Gazettes or flourish of historiographers.

When we had begun to breathe a little, I noticed that, amid the general joy, Chippenham, though deeply moved, betrayed no token of satisfaction. He was alive,—he was safe. —Alas!—Where was Frank?—Reading my anxiety in my eyes, "Go to him!" whispered he—"The wound is severe; but I earnestly trust not dangerous."

I snatched up my hat. The hack-cab might not yet have driven off; and though it was difficult to withdraw from the contemplation of such exquisite human felicity as brightened poor Mereworth's countenance, I hastened to Walsingham House. — Blockhead!—Frank was not there,—they knew nothing about him; and I had to drive back to Grosvenor Square, and ascertain from Chippenham that I should find my young friend at the Star and Garter at Richmond. They had been interrupted at Wimbledon, and proceeded in the afternoon to

Richmond Park;—where their purpose was accomplished, and so thoroughly accomplished, that ten minutes afterwards Frank was borne insensible, from loss of blood, into the hotel.

While waiting for Mereworth's carriage, which he insisted on having out to take me to Richmond, I was rejoiced to find that this untoward incident was already exercising the most desirable influence on Chippenham's mind. His generous nature had flung off the scum of passion; and he was now eager to admit that the duel was of his own provoking, and that the sole offence of Frank Walsingham consisted in being an object of preference to my niece.

It was no moment to increase his care and remorse by a lecture—though I dare say Mereworth said enough after I was gone.—I was quite satisfied from his manner of naming Frank, and his earnest entreaty to me to bring him back speedy news, that he had not only made the *amende honorable*, but was more

deeply concerned in the result for Frank's sake than for his own.—

Let such of my readers as do not rejoice in so good a cook as to secure them a bad heart, (for I am convinced that half the heartlessness of the great world proceeds from the preponderating efforts of their digestion,) enter into the state of my feelings that night between Hyde Park Corner and the Richmond Gate!—A whole day elapsed, without so much as an attempt to ascertain to what sort of penance Mary might have been condemned for my sins! —a whole day of torment and suspense, to that gentle soul!—It was bad enough to be hurrying down to Frank Walsingham, with the certainty of finding him in torture and the probability of finding him in danger,—harassed all the time by a dread lest the cause of the duel should transpire, to the utter mortification of my brother;—without being perplexed by visions of Mary's pale face and downcast eyes.—I swear there was a moment as I was crossing

Putney Bridge, when I was half inclined to return!—

And after all, what did I gain by my journey? —It was twelve by the time I reached the Star and Garter, and Walsingham was asleep!— Even Mitchelston, who had good-naturedly refused to leave him, was dozing on the sofa, so overcome by the agitations of the day, that he could explain no more than I knew already from Chippenham; *i.e.* that the ball had passed through the fleshy part of the arm, and that unless fever came on upon the morrow, there was no danger.—

All I could do was to send him to bed and assume his place as nurse—(Frank's servant being a mere tiger); and despatch back Mereworth's carriage to town, with news as vague and unsatisfactory as a royal bulletin.

That night, I watched in the room adjoining Frank's bed-chamber, and had at least the satisfaction of knowing myself to be a somewhat more intelligent attendant than Mitchelston;—

nor was it till all the house was astir with the morning light, that I allowed myself to fall off to sleep.—My waking thoughts had been disagreeable enough, and my dreams only served to re-produce them in a more painful and disconnected shape; and it was from a vision of finding Mary stretched cold and breathless on the turf under the wall of Richmond Park, shot through the heart by Frank Walsingham, to whom Lady Mitchelston (disguised like the famous Countess of Shrewsbury as a page) officiated as second, that I was roused by the sudden apparition of three things still more disagreeable that even that evil dream;—to wit—the surgeon with his instruments,—the waiter with a newspaper containing a most offensive account of the duel,—and Lord Rotherhithe, with a face full of sapient meanings but no more feeling than the face of the parish clock!—

I suppose others besides myself must have had occasion to notice that events of the highest import to the happiness of nations are often

leaden footed on the road to publicity, while every idle tale of scandal reaches the press (to borrow a simile of Lessing,) "Schnell, als der Uebergang dem Guten zum Bösen."

This duel,—what did it matter to the public at large?—A quarrel between two foolish boys, who, in the good old times of bags and swords, would have fought it out ten minutes afterwards in the Mall, shaken hands on the ground, and supped together in Privy Gardens afterwards, with a flask or two of Burgundy. Yet I swear there was as much said about it, true and false, in the morning papers, as there had been about the siege of Antwerp!—Frank was represented as in a hopeless state,—Chippenham as having fled the country; and the cause of their dispute was pointed out with a degree of obscurity intended to render all doubt on the subject impossible, as "a competition for the hand of the beautiful and accomplished Miss D**by, only daughter of the Honourable Member for the County Palatine of L.!"—

All this was very provoking. It needed the comfortable assurances afforded by the medical men that their patient was going on favourably, to reconcile me to the idea of the notoriety thus shamefully affixed to my niece.—Poor Danby! —Right well could I appreciate his vexation; and I swear it was quite as much to afford him the poor comfort in my power, and to satisfy the anxieties of Chippenham, that I soon afterwards agreed to leave Frank under the surveillance of his brother, — as to institute those inquiries in Bruton Street which it was indispensable to bring to an issue.

On the whole, I think I was rash; for I knew that Rotherhithe, having read the paragraphs in the papers, must be aware that it was his own brother and not Chippenham who was the secret cause of his recent rejection in Connaught Place; and nothing would have been easier to administer three teaspoonfuls of the anodyne mixture ordered for Frank, instead of one!—It must have been bitterly irritating to

the Viscount to be supplanted by his reckless younger brother;—and even his frigid nature might be warmed to frenzy by so public a certification of the fact!—

Had the stories regarded any other man than Frank Walsingham, the newspapers would have been a fortnight spelling out particulars, enabling them to make the secret a secret for millions.—But, as I said at first, Frank was one of those unlucky dogs, who cannot put to sea without bringing on a tempest!

CHAPTER XI.

Oh! dearest father, in this agony
Of pleasure and of pain,—even while I kiss
Thy garment's hem with transport, can it be
That doubt should mingle with my filial joy?

BYRON.

THAT day I was early in Connaught Place.—Dear Jane and her father were my first objects on visiting London. I had promised the poor fellow at Richmond it should be so.

Most eager was I to know, before I saw Danby, whether Lord Ormington had been there,—for it made worlds of difference whether my brother had been influenced in his perusal of the paragraphs in the papers, by his own clear equitable judgment, or the judgment of other people.

I was not fated to learn. He was out when I reached his house; and my sister Julia, who was with her niece, came to the dressing-room door when I knocked for admittance. I would rather have seen Jane alone; for something reflective of Herries in his wife, always inspired me with distrust.—But there was no help for it.—I must see them together, or leave the message of Frank Walsingham unsaid.—Mrs. Herries attempted for a moment to dissuade me from coming in at all; on pretence that the poor girl was still too much overpowered by the explanation which had taken place between them to be in a state for conversation.—But the moment Jane caught the sound of my voice she rushed forward, and for the first time in her life threw her arms round my neck and wept bitterly.

"You have seen him,—I *know* you have seen him!" cried she, drawing me into the room.—"Dear Cecil!—will he,—*will he die!*"—

"Compose yourself, Jane!—Compose your-

self, dear Jenny," said I, placing her by the side of my sister on the sofa.—" Walsingham is in no immediate danger.—He and Chippenham are happily reconciled.—All is on the most satisfactory footing.—A foolish quarrel at Crockford's was the origin of their meeting."

" Do not mislead her, Cecil:—by my husband's advice I have told her the whole truth," interrupted Julia, with calm severity.—" Half the evils in this world arise from deceiving ourselves and others.—The affliction by which you see Jane so much overcome at this moment, is the consequence of having dealt disingenuously with her father. She had never given him the slightest reason to surmise her attachment to your friend Mr. Walsingham; and has consequently to lament that the blow of this cruel perplexity will fall on him as a double grievance."—

" At all events, I see no particular advantage in aggravating her affliction," said I, as the tears of my poor niece flowed anew from

beneath the fair slender hands now clasped over her face.—"I have not been more in Jane's or Walsingham's confidence than yourself; but, aware that one of them is in a state of bodily and the other of mental suffering, I am more inclined to soothe the troubles of two persons I dearly love, than indulge in the sense of my own superior wisdom."

Jane pressed nearer to me as I spoke. Amid the miseries and terrors surrounding her, she seemed to have found a friend.—

"I have not yet seen my father," whispered she;—"and oh! if you knew how I dread the meeting!—He, who so shuns and contemns the idea of newspaper notoriety,—to find *my* name—the name of the daughter to whom he has so devoted himself,—a mark for the scorn of the world!"—

"Do not deceive yourself or let others deceive you by the influence of high sounding words," said I, in a tone of expostulation, addressing itself to Julia.—"That the news-

papers should have pointed you out, dear Jane, as the innocent cause of a quarrel between the sons of the Earls of Mereworth and Walsingham, is far from rendering you a mark for what you childishly term the scorn of the world.—Frank Walsingham is a younger son, —but he is not an adventurer,—he is not ——"

"He is one on whom you well know that her father would never bestow her hand!"—cried Mrs. Herries, with indignation.—"To have her name publicly accoupled with his, therefore, is a serious misfortune; and I own I am amazed, Cecil, to find *you* sanctioning and abetting the preposterous pretensions of your friend."

"Inquire of Jane, if you think it worth while," said I, calmly, "how far I have been the advocate of Frank Walsingham, or indeed whether I ever mentioned his name to her, till this day!—Danby has a right to exact a much higher alliance for his daughter, and I should be the last person on earth to suggest opposi-

tion to any choice of his. I see no good purpose, however, in wounding her feelings by allowing her to suppose herself degraded in the estimation of society."—

Longer than enough was the argument continued;—poor Jane persisting in the belief that she was disgraced for ever,—and Mrs. Herries in the conviction that Frank Walsingham was a designing fortune-hunter;—while *I* stood to my opinion, that the brother of Lord Rotherhithe ought not to be thus disparaged by those who set so inordinate a value upon himself.—

Julia had acquired from her husband a sort of sententious dictatorial way of setting people's feelings at nought, which is one of the least fascinating forms of superiority; and she was delivering her axioms in a style to do honour to the Rector of a Scottish University, or a professor of Political Economy, utterly regardless of the tears of her niece, or the frowns of

my indignation, when the door was quietly opened, and Danby stood among us.—

I do believe that he came prepared,—not to reprove or revile,—of that he was incapable,—but to say,—"My child, whom I so love,—why have you deceived me?"

But no sooner had he caught sight of his daughter's distress, and perceived that she had been already exposed to objurgation, than every adverse feeling subsided: and he walked straight across the room, and took her silently into his arms as if bestowing his benediction upon her for the first time in his life.

My brother's face was turned towards me as he pressed his daughter fervently to his bosom,—pale,—calm,—and expressive of the holiest and most hallowing tenderness. Never shall I forget the unearthly elevation of his countenance.—He looked as he *was*, overcoming by self-conquest the mortal feelings of an immortal nature.

I vow to Heaven there were moments when the face of Danby, albeit far from beautiful of feature, exhibited all that the most inspired imagination of the ancient masters ever imparted to that of the Saviour of mankind. And well it might!—for what human imagination can conceive higher attributes of the divinity, than the humility of a great mind, or the exercise of power only as a means of grace to the deserving, and mercy to those who have offended!

Without one jarring atom form'd,

Danby was indeed of more than human excellence!—I did not hear the words he addressed to his daughter. They were so very, *very* low, that one could only surmise their soothing nature by the agony of penitent grief with which she clung anew to his bosom.—His consolations were doubtless such as he felt her mother would have whispered to her from the grave; and when he had spoken them, he

gave one heavy sigh, as if to save his heart from bursting.—

I felt that even his brother and sister had no business to be present at such an interview. But Julia was beginning to prose again ; —and even my earnest sympathy was a something to interpose between his angelic spirit and her worldly wisdom.—

He sat down on the sofa, — mechanically, like a person who, stunned by a violent blow, has scarcely yet recovered the use of his faculties ;—but still encircling the waist of his daughter with his arm, as though he felt that at such a moment, she stood more than usually in need of kindness and protection. But Jane had not yet dared to raise her eyes to his face ; rendered more conscious of her gracelessness through his tender forbearance, than by the aid of all the reproaches in the world.—

His first word was a generous one.—

" I have been with Mereworth," said he, in a voice I could scarcely recognize as his. " I

find from Lord Chippenham that the blame of this unfortunate business rests entirely with himself. Whatever other accusation may be made against Mr. Walsingham, it appears that in the present instance, he has behaved with temper, courage, and gentlemanly feeling."—

Could there be a more generous mode of comforting the wounded feelings of his child!

Julia, was evidently vexed to perceive that Danby displayed neither severity to the offending Jane, nor coldness to the offending Cecil; for *she* was one of those who delight in a rigid measure of justice. The consequence was that she soon took leave, and I accompanied her out, feeling that two people sincerely attached to each other, had always better be left to the interpretation of their own hearts.

After seeing and satisfying the Mereworths and their son, I hurried home. Another letter from Bruton Street!—not from Marcia,—

but from Lady Crutchley;—calling me to account for my conduct to her daughter in the terms that are called no measured terms, when one means to designate the strong language of May Fair.

Take it from me, dear sex, who am so generally recognized your advocate as to be called the female solicitor-general, that out of every four letters you write, you had better burn two; out of every four notes,—whether *billets-doux*, or *billets-amers*,—three and three quarters.—(Now for an apothegm—Ahem!) Half the actions,—whether of love or immorality, of modern times and fashionable life, arise from the abuse of the crowquill.—You *cannot* write much or write often, without writing nonsense.

I wish the Crutchley correspondence had contained nothing *worse* than nonsense!—I have occasionally been called harsh names in tender letters indited by fair hands; and like the roughness of the pine-apple, the fruit has

been only the sweeter for that harsh exterior. But those two old women were bitter to the core.—It is one's own fault to be sure, if one drives one's cab against a mud-cart; but the splashing is not the less disagreeable till dried and brushed off.—

I believe, however, she had some slight justification. In patriarchal times, before the deluge of course, promise-breakers used to be stoned to death.—

Previous to brushing off the mud by answering her ladyship's detestable epistle, meanwhile, I was anxious to learn how far the name of my niece might be involved by common report in the recent duel; and accordingly walked from St. James's Place to White's, with a view of meeting and being met by the throng of loungers, the flux and reflux of which, like a train of ants, blackens the pavement at that hour.

It has often been urged by the hyper-critical against the tone of the School for Scandal, that

it was written by Sheridan before his admittance into the great world, and savours of the littleness of the Bath world rather than the distinction of London bon ton.

I have seen a vast variety of worlds,—both abroad and at home; and must own that the only difference I ever perceived in their greatness or littleness, consisted in the size of their assemblies.—There are as many Mrs. Candours and Sir Benjamin Backbites in Grosvenor Square as in Milsom Street; and the "bullet in the thorax"-scene of the sparkling Comedy was out-bulleted and out-thoraxed that day in St. James's Street, by the thousand and one lies pelted at my head.—Those idlers of Fashion who pass their lives in blowing the bubbles of smalltalk, would be miserable if, now and then, one of these aërial mischiefs did not rest upon some object of costly furniture, to enhance their sport by the serious detriment occasioned by its explosion.

It would be amazing, (if aught arising from

the incivilities of the very civilized, could still produce amazement) to consider the excitement produced in the world of fashion by any event calculated, as the newspapers have it, "to place in mourning a considerable number of families of the highest distinction." An elopement, a duel, a bankruptcy, an anything that wrings to the heart's core people who might otherwise pass through life as heartless, stirs up the vivacity of the clubs like a pinch of bitter kali dropped into the acidity of a glass of lemonade, till the effervescence rouses the satiety of many a jaded palate.—Somebody's carriage is broken,—somebody's heart is broken,—no matter which!—the crowd collects to stare at and talk over the disaster.—And make haste, good people, and talk about it,—for to-morrow the event will be stale,—shouldered out of notice by some newer or more cruel catastrophe!—

If ever I make public my "Idler in England,"—(think what a sensation would be

excited by CECIL'S "IDLER IN ENGLAND!") instead of telling the world what dukes have dined with me because their duchesses did not choose me to dine with them, or how much I used to pay to Sewell for my hats, or Curlewis for my coats, I will record the bon mots I have heard perpetrated at White's upon the deaths of my friends, and the amazingly droll things said at Crockford's touching the successive ruinations of its members. I swear by Saint Howell and James! I have beheld the beau monde ready to die with laughing at a pun serving to commemorate one of the most dreadful atrocities of social life;—the "rend your hearts," of scriptural exhortation being modernly transmuted into "split your sides."—

No sooner did I set my foot over the frontiers of Club land, accordingly, than I was assailed on all sides by assurances that Frank Walsingham was dead,—if not dead,—dying;—that he and my niece had been fetched back when half-way to Gretna Green, or if not half-

way to Gretna Green, that they had long been clandestinely engaged;—and that poor little Jane had "sealed her father's eyes close up as oak," and thrown dust in those of her uncle, in order to favour the pretensions of the least reputable of her suitors, while playing fast and loose with the rest.—She had made a fool of Chippenham, they said, and a tool of Rotherhithe;—and some even hinted that reports were afloat of her having hastened to Richmond to attend upon her lover, the moment she heard of the duel.

This part of the scandal, however, I showed such resolute intentions of tracing to the inventor, that, with a view to prevent a second duel, the fountain-head of evil was pointed out in Lady Brettingham.—Beneath my notice, as beneath the respect of honest men! The woman capable of rendering her youth and beauty subservient to ——— But remember Boccaccio's advice, friend CECIL, "*e reservate questo per la predica!*"

Half an hour ago, I had some thoughts of playing false with my dear Public, as regards one or two particulars of my proceedings that day. But on reconsidering the matter, I feel that it has not merited the slightest reserve on my part.—I will therefore candidly admit that the *real* object of girding on fresh boots to my feet, previous to sitting down and answering Lady Crutchley's letter, arose from my desire to saunter along Bruton Street on the opposite side of the way to the door bearing her ladyship's name on the door-plate. Mary was, of course, incapable of the vulgarity of staring out of the window.—Still, chance sometimes favours one with glimpses of a fair head, between a Venetian blind and a mignionette-box. It was just possible I might obtain ocular proof that the poor child's eyes were less red on Wednesday afternoon, than Monday night; —though there was every reason to fear that the interim must have been an unquiet one.

But alas! that hateful old woman, as if fated

to do nothing on earth for the satisfaction of her fellow-creatures, — abided on the sunny side of the way!—Every blind was drawn down,—every window hermetically sealed!—The house looked like any other house of the neighbourhood;—nothing to distinguish it from the rest, more than distinguishes from its fellows the oyster concealing the pearl beyond price that is to convey opulence and distinction to its future favoured possessor.

I suppose it was the impossibility of catching so much as a glimpse of Mary's shadow on the wall, that inspired me with the necessary ungraciousness to indite, in terms as positive as those of a bill in chancery, my withdrawal of all pretension to the hand of Miss Crutchley. —My allusions to another attachment were at present vague and mysterious; but the resignation of my claims upon the favour of the heiress, unmistakable.

I took occasion to observe in my last chapter that the first letter of the virtuous Marcia was

indited in the frightfullest handwriting I ever beheld. But I protest that it merited a calligraphic prize, compared with the spiteful-looking characters,—the chevaux de frise on Bath post,—purporting to convey a rejoinder to my polite refusal of office under the Crutchley Administration.—The conjurations of the Scottish witch, by whom the storm was raised to keep Anne of Denmark out of Leith harbour, can scarcely have been concocted in hieroglyphics more truly diabolical.

Ha! ha! ha! ha! ha!—Forty-four years of age, and threatened with an action for breach of promise of marriage by the wealthiest heiress in Great Britain!—At what amount would the gentlemen of the long robe or gentlemen of the short robe, or whatever they may be by whom these matrimonial appraisements areassessed, presume to lay the damages?—What was supposed to be the prime cost, errors excepted, of CECIL?—Conceive my personal merits, weighed in the balance against two hundred and fifty-

five thousand pounds, odd shillings, consols,—Tchindagore Park,—and a capital family mansion looking sideways into Berkeley Square!—What glorious fun for the newspapers,—what nuts for the clubs!—

O, Plutus!—for what was I reserved!—The fate of Aline, reine de Golconde, that queen of diamonds so naïvely pourtrayed by the goldfinch's-quill of the charming Chevalier de Boufflers, was mere common-place compared with mine.

> Lætus in præsens animus, quod ultra est
> Oderit curare!—

To be belaboured to death with ingots,—smothered in Bank of England notes,—and have it inscribed for epitaph on my tombstone —"BY CASH!"—

I own I never expected, in the maturity of my years, to have the sterling amount all London was disputing as its redemption from the King's Bench, fling itself with such wilful prodigality at my feet!—

It was quite clear to *me* that if the heiress persisted in her threat of bringing the matter into court, it could only be as a pretext for raising herself cent per cent in the matrimonial market, by the publication of my letters. It is true they were not of a very torrid nature: —as a man of letters, I am habitually cautious. Word of mouth and word of pen ought to be synonymous as regards matters of finance;—but in affairs of the heart, as different as the pace of Satirist from the slow but sure-footed amble of a Spanish mule.—Conceive what vipers would have been hatched in the bosom of a thousand respectable families, had I given the rein to my Pegasus, and committed to wire wove the whispers in which I committed *myself! Que de couleuvres à avaler pour les maris* if, by some sort of Photographic process, the heart of CECIL had been fac-similarly pourtrayed in his correspondence!—

The epistles, therefore, through the reflection of whose brightness the un-fair Marcia intended

to shine for a moment as the Juliet of the Court of un-Common Pleas, consisted simply in such little notes as—

"I shall have the pleasure of joining your party to-night at Covent Garden.—

Much your's,

Cecil Danby."

"St. James's Place,
Monday."

Or,

"Enchanted, dear Miss Crutchley, to wait upon you to-day. You are well aware how much my time is at your service.

Faithfully your's,

Cecil Danby."

"White's, Tuesday."

Or,

"You have made me very happy by appointing a day for our expedition to the Dulwich Gallery. Rely upon *me*.

Always your's,

Cecil Danby."

But though notes such as these are probably received every day of her life by every woman in May Fair between twenty and forty years of age, in quantities to suffice, when properly shred into flakes, for a snow storm in the Christmas pantomime,—imagine, dear Public, the distinction likely to be conferred on that ungainly woman, when it came to be lawyerly known that CECIL had signed himself "MUCH HER'S!'—that CECIL'S time had been at *her* service!—that CECIL had been "made happy" by any concession she could offer!—"FAITHFULLY *her's*," indeed!—How could she be such an idiot as to believe it!—

The Douglases, Stanleys, Butlers, and others of the highest and mightiest families of our aristocracy, preserve among their peerage archives certain royal letters, of higher import, as a matter of history, than even their letters patent of nobility.

But what were even the most "private and confidential" of these, compared with a note

dated from White's and subscribed with the name of CECIL, to a woman of bony structure and stony heart, whose hand deserved to be pressed only with a pair of insect tongs!—Faugh!—

She felt of course that her fortune, had it been to make, would have been centupled by even the flimsiest of those sterling notes.—

Moreover, I was sure of the Clubs in my favour;—and with *their* verdict secure, what man in his senses cares a minnikin pin for the utmost rigour of the law?—The woman of ten thousand was *no* favourite. She had behaved shabbily to Lord George Hartingfield, and infamously to De Greyvin; and the younger brothers were vehement in opposition.

He who was to avenge their cause on Miss Crutchley, had at length appeared! Like the damsel of Smyrna described by La Bruyère,—"*cette fille infortunée perdit le sommeil, ne voulut plus manger; et la jeunesse de Smyrne qui l'avait vu si fière et si insensible, trouva que les dieux l'avaient trop punie.*"—

Well! there must come a time of atonement for all this!—"Nero is an angler in the lake of darkness!"—says Shakspeare's madman, who talks such exquisite reason;—and if those who give the devil his due receive retributive justice in return, there is every chance that CECIL the Coxcomb may go a fishing in his Imperial company!—

END OF VOL. II.

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